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ABSTRACT

The last of three volumes studying the relationship between writing research and instruction, this four-part report focuses on writing assessment. The first section details specifications for an instrument assessing student writing samples and the following composition skills: word processing, sentence processing, paragraph development, organizational skill, use of dictionary and reference sources, spelling, and writing mechanics. It also reports on the administration of such an assessment instrument to students from grades 1 to 6 in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The second section discusses specifications for competency based assessment of the following language arts skills: (1) listening, (2) grammar usage, (3) sentence structure, (4) capitalization and punctuation, (5) language expression, (6) spelling, (7) literature, and (8) study skills, media literacy, and nonverbal communication. The third section briefly describes the reading, mathematics, and language proficiency surveys and review exercises administered to entering high school students in the Sacramento City Unified School District, and the final section presents an annotated bibliography of assessment reports. (MM)

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COOPERATIVE INQUIRY ON
COMPOSITION INSTRUCTION
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COOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL APPLICATION OF WRITING RESEARCH

FINAL REPORT

VOLUME THREE

November 1982

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is a well recognized regional as well as national problem, but the research base for dealing with the problem is not very strong. Recognizing this gap, the National Institute of Education has been fostering research in writing through its grants program. Over the years, SWRL has also included composition as an object of inquiry, concentrating on embodying research in tools that are directly usable by students, teachers, administrators, and others concerned with composition instruction and assessment. Work in the area of "Cooperative Instructional Application of Writing Research" joined the capabilities of NIE and of SWRL to accelerate the process by which research nationally can have an impact on instruction regionally (and nationally).

During the course of this project we invited to SWRL a number of writing researchers, as well as a number of composition teachers from the SWRL region, to meet with SWRL language researchers and instructional experts. Thus the researchers met with audiences with whom they could discuss extensively and substantively the instructional implications of their work. Such cooperative forums had several benefits:

1. Researchers from academic settings met directly with persons experienced in the creation of instructional resources and with persons who actually engage in instruction. Consequently, the composition researchers who participated in this collaborative program had the opportunity to develop a stronger sense of (1) what constitutes educationally oriented research, and (2) what kinds of research questions and strategies have potential for immediate impact on instruction and learning.

2. SWRL staff and representative regional constituents concerned with composition instruction gained immediate, substantial access to current research in writing.

3. The instructional implications of research were clarified. Most writing research is sharply focused, but narrow in scope. Although this is an appropriate research strategy, the individual research efforts are often too specific to form the basis for significant instructional implementation. Collectively, however, sets of these endeavors can form meaningful and responsible bases for instructional application.

4. Research results were embodied into forms usable for instruction and assessment. Few, if any, writing researchers have the resources or inclination to attempt this. SWRL has the capability to forward such implementation and has a broad experiential base that allows us to avoid many of the procedural problems that prevent the exploitation of good ideas to their best advantage for instruction and assessment.

Providing this forum for the exchange of ideas among researchers, practitioners, and persons with instructional implementation experience is of itself beneficial. However, the problems in composition instruction and assessment are of sufficient magnitude to warrant not only discussion but also application of promising research. Therefore, this final report summarizes both research in writing and the instruction/assessment applications of such research.

This report is divided into three volumes. Volume One covers the "heart" of the project: discussions among researchers, practitioners, and instructional experts; studies of writing research; instructional applications. Volume Two covers extensions of the work discussed in Volume One; these extensions--sometimes funded by other NIE/SWRL projects or funded by other agencies--exemplify cooperative activities that developed from our basic studies. Volume Three covers extensions specific to the assessment of writing.

Acknowledgments: This report was prepared by Bruce Cronnell, Larry Gentry, Ann Humes, and Joseph Lawlor.

COOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL APPLICATION OF WRITING RESEARCH

FINAL REPORT

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VOLUME THREE: ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

Assessment has always been an important part of SWRL's work. During the 1960s and 1970s, when SWRL was developing instructional programs, the assessment component of these programs always received particular emphasis. In addition, SWRL has been involved in various other assessment activities, both with NIE funding (e.g., Proficiency Verification Systems, see Volume Two, Part IV) and with other funding (e.g., Resources for Developing a Student Placement System for Bilingual Programs).

Recently, school districts have been concerned about assessing their students' progress--sometimes under legislative mandate, sometimes as a result of district concerns about curriculum. Several school districts have contracted with SWRL for assistance in developing appropriate assessment instruments. When these assessments have components related to writing (labeled in various ways, e.g., written composition, language, language arts), SWRL composition staff have participated in the cooperative development of the assessment systems. SWRL's vast experience with composition allows us to provide informed assistance to school districts that wish to assess their writing (and related) instruction. Through such ventures, NIE's support of programmatic research at SWRL has direct benefits for local school districts.

Our work with three school districts is described in this part of the report:

I: Los Angeles Unified School District: The Survey of Essential Skills is administered each year at the end of grades 1-6. In addition to the Written Composition component discussed here, the SES contains reading and mathematics sections (also developed by SWRL). This part of the report contains, in addition to a general description, detailed assessment specifications and a report of the 1980 administration.

II: District of Columbia Public Schools: Competency Based Assessments are administered in grades 1-6 at the end of each semester in language arts, science, reading, and math; SWRL has developed the assessment instruments in the first two subject areas. This part of the report describes the work undertaken to develop the Competency Based Assessments for Language Arts and contains detailed reports of item specifications in the following areas: listening, grammar usage, sentence structure, capitalization, punctuation, language expression, spelling, literature, study skills, mass media, nonverbal communication.

III: Sacramento City Unified School District: Proficiency Surveys are administered in grade 5 to determine whether students have successfully achieved elementary school learning goals in language, reading, and math. Students who do not perform satisfactorily on the grade 5 administration are given Review Exercises and then have another chance at an alternative version of the Survey.

As well as designing instruments for assessing writing, SWRL composition staff have prepared a number of reports on writing assessment in addition to the reports contained in this volume. Some reports have described state minimum competency requirements. An important set of reports describes the SWRL system for evaluating writing samples and the studies of this evaluation system. (The SWRL writing-sample evaluation system provides prompts and scoring guidelines that are directly related to instructional goals; moreover, the scoring process is designed for rapid, reliable use without training.) In addition, several reports describe specifications for developing assessments; these reports are based on our work with particular assessment systems. Part IV of this volume contains an annotated bibliography of assessment reports prepared during this contract period.

PART I: SURVEY OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS

PART I

SURVEY OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS
(Los Angeles Unified School District)

Introduction

"The Development of Assessment Specifications for Composition Skills"
(Technical Note No. 2-80/25)

"Written Composition Results on the 1980 Survey of Essential Skills"
(Technical Note No. 2-81/07)

SURVEY OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS:
LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

In cooperation with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), SWRL has developed assessment instruments in written composition, reading, and mathematics for grades 1-6 of the district's elementary schools. These instruments, collectively known as the Survey of Essential Skills (SES), are designed to assess students' performance on objectives specified in the district's curriculum guide (Los Angeles Unified School District, 1979).

Background

In 1978, LAUSD contracted with SWRL to develop an experimental assessment program, the Survey of Progress in Essential Skills (SPES). The district presented SWRL staff with a continuum of skills for written composition in grades 1-6. SWRL responded to the continuum, noting several problems with ambiguous skill statements, with duplication of content across skills, and with duplication across the reading and composition continuums. In addition, inappropriate grade levels were noted for some skills, based upon SWRL's analyses of language arts textbooks (Humes, 1978; Cronnell, 1978). LAUSD then replied to SWRL's comments, and a revised written composition continuum was drafted. This revised continuum served as the basis for developing the SPES.

SWRL prepared assessment specifications for each skill that was to be included on the SPES. These specifications included sample items and item descriptions for both constructed-response and selected-response assessment tasks (Humes, Cronnell, Boscon, Fieker, & Rodriguez, 1979).

Recognizing the need to include writing samples in the assessments, SWRL staff also developed and tested writing-sample prompts, scoring keys, and scoring guides (Humes, 1979). In the spring of 1979, the SPES was administered to elementary school students in the district. The results of that administration, reported in Cronnell and Humes (1980), provided valuable information for subsequent development efforts.

1980 Survey of Essential Skills

Development of the 1980 version of the SES naturally drew upon SWRL's experience with the experimental 1979 version. In addition, SES development also benefited from SWRL's work on a separate USOE-funded project that developed a framework of essential English language skills for grades 1-6 (Language Skills Framework, 1980).

Consequently, SWRL staff recommended major changes for the 1980 SES. Grade levels for several skills were adjusted to match more closely the levels at which instruction is normally presented. In addition, staff described content differences for skills that were to be assessed at more than one grade level. For example, the skill "Selects and uses verbs appropriately" was scheduled to be assessed at grades 3 and 5. SWRL recommended that the grade 3 assessment include only simple past forms of irregular verbs, and that the grade 5 assessment include both past and past participle forms.

After consulting with LAUSD, SWRL then prepared assessment specifications and sample items for the following categories of skills:

- Word Processing (e.g., using pronoun forms; identifying synonyms)
- Sentence Processing (e.g., identifying sentence types; constructing sentences)

- Paragraph Development (e.g., ordering sentences; using transitions)
- Organizational Skills (e.g., classifying words; constructing outlines)
- Dictionary/Reference Sources (e.g., alphabetizing words; using diacritical marks)
- Spelling (e.g., spelling rhyming words; adding suffixes to words)
- Mechanics (i.e., using rules for capitalization and punctuation)

For each skill, complete specifications were written. These specifications included a skill description that outlined the content of the skill and noted any inherent skills or prerequisite knowledge involved. Each skill description was followed by at least one sample item, with a detailed item description. These specifications are presented in the paper in the following section of this report:

> "The Development of Assessment Specifications for Composition Skills" (Technical Note No. 2-80/02).

SWRL also prepared writing-sample prompts, scoring keys, and scoring guides for the third- and sixth-grade surveys. The scoring method used for these writing samples was based on current research in writing assessment (Humes, 1980) and was found to yield reliable scores (Cronnell, 1980).

The vocabulary of the SES items was controlled so that reading ability would not become a factor in assessing written composition skills. Generally, words used were those that were listed at least one grade level below the level of assessment, as specified in the word lists compiled by Taylor, Frackenpohl, and White (1979). However, technical terms (e.g., sentence) that were at or above grade level sometimes had to be used in the items when no acceptable synonyms were available.

LAUSD reviewed SWRL's specifications, and some items were revised. In the spring of 1980, the SES was administered to more than 200,000 students in the district. Results of that administration are reported in the following paper, which concludes this part of the volume:

> "Written Composition Results on the 1980 Survey of Essential Skills" (Technical Note No. 2-81/07).

1982 Survey of Essential Skills

Results from the 1980 SES indicated that, in general, the assessment instruments provided an accurate picture of students' performance on essential written composition skills. However, several problems with individual items were noted. Consequently, SWRL collaborated with LAUSD to develop a 1982 version of the SES.

Much of the work for the 1982 SES involved writing parallel versions of the 1980 items. However, several item formats were revised completely, and, in one case, an entire skill was deleted. A few grade-level adjustments were also made, and the Examiner's Manuals were revised to clarify procedures for administering the surveys.

In the spring of 1982, the revised SES was administered to elementary school students in the district. Data from this administration were analyzed, and a few minor problems were noted. Revisions have been suggested to alleviate these problems.

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TN 2-81/07

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATIONS FOR COMPOSITION SKILLS

Bruce Cronnell, Joseph Lawlor, Larry Gentry, Ann Humes, Priscilla Maltbie

ABSTRACT

Detailed specifications are presented for the assessment of composition skills. The specifications include extensive skill descriptions, sample items for assessing the skills, and item descriptions that describe the construction of appropriate assessment items.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATIONS FOR COMPOSITION SKILLS

Bruce Cronnell, Joseph Lawlor, Larry Gentry, Ann Humes, Priscilla Maltbie*

INTRODUCTION

Throughout its history, SWRL has been concerned with many different aspects of language instruction and has been supported in this work first by the Office of Education and then by the National Institute of Education. One important component of language instruction is composition, which may be variously labeled--English, writing, language arts--and which includes, in addition to the actual writing of compositions, such areas as handwriting, spelling, mechanics (especially punctuation and capitalization), language, usage, and grammar.

In the early 1970's, SWRL developed elementary instructional programs in writing (Niedermeyer, n.d.) and in spelling (Cronnell, n.d.; Humes, 1976a). In the late 1970's, SWRL investigated vocabulary instruction (Humes, 1976b) and the composition needs of students at the post-elementary level (e.g., Humes, 1979; Humes & Cronnell, 1979).

Also in the late 1970's, SWRL worked on Proficiency Verification Systems (PVS), which are assessment systems closely tied to the content of elementary school textbooks. The PVS studies required the development of extensive indices to code the content and performance modes found in commonly used textbooks (Cronnell, 1978; Humes, 1978). Each textbook exercise was coded for what is taught and for how that content is practiced.

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*This paper is considerably based on Humes, Cronnell, Lawlor, Gentry, & Fieker (1980 a,b,c,d,e). Thus, Ann Humes' contributions--direct and indirect--are considerable. In addition to her work in the above mentioned reports, she specifically wrote the Writing Sample section of this paper and provided considerable editorial guidance throughout. Other staff participated as follows: Cronnell: Introduction, Organizational Skills, overall planning, specification, and editing; Lawlor: Sentence Processing, Paragraph Development, Mechanics in Writing; Gentry: Word Processing, Spelling; Maltbie: Dictionary/Reference Sources. Caroline Fieker provided editorial comments.

After computer processing of the coded data, detailed analyses of textbook instruction can be prepared (e.g., Cronnell & Humes, in press; Gentry, 1979, 1980).

All of this work has put SWRL in the forefront of knowledge about composition instruction and assessment. As a result of SWRL's vast background, the Laboratory is in an excellent position to provide assistance to school districts that wish to conduct systematic, competency-based assessment of their students' progress. This paper describes one such project, for which SWRL's expertise in language instruction and research was used to meet the needs of a major school district in SWRL's region.

Working in a close collaborative arrangement with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), SWRL developed the 1980 version of the Survey of Essential Skills (SES)--a grade-by-grade assessment instrument for reading, mathematics, and composition in grades 1-6. The Composition section of the SES is based on SWRL's research, which was used to operationalize, in item form, the LAUSD Written Composition Continuum (Los Angeles Unified School District, 1979). This continuum (and thus the Composition section of the SES) is organized into seven categories of "Enabling Skills" that are to be taught in the District: Word Processing, Sentence Processing, Paragraph Development, Organizational Skills, Dictionary/Reference Sources, Spelling, Mechanics in Writing. In addition, the SES contains Writing Samples that are derived from the four categories of "Composing Tasks" in the continuum: Sensory/Descriptive Writing, Creative Writing, Informational/Practical Writing, Expository Writing.

This paper provides detailed specifications for 1980 SES Composition. The paper is comprised of eight sections--one for each skill category, including Writing Samples. Each section begins with a brief introduction and a table that lists the LAUSD continuum skills and the grade level(s) at which they are assessed. (Although the continuum presents a fully balanced instructional program, the SES emphasizes the most essential skills. Therefore, not all continuum skills are assessed in the SES; reasons for not assessing specific skills are provided on the pages for those skills.)

The specifications for each skill begin with the identifying code for the continuum skill; skill codes include "C" to indicate Composition and one or more parenthesized letters that are abbreviations of category names. The letters are followed by the individual skill number. Next on the page is the Skill Statement, which is taken (unedited) from the LAUSD continuum. Then the grade level at which the skill is assessed in the 1980 SES is indicated; grade level is based on the LAUSD continuum description. (If a skill is assessed at more than one grade level, this information is noted after the specifications have been presented for the lower grade level.)

For each assessed skill, a Skill Description is provided, detailing the specific content of the skill for the grade level at which it is assessed. The Skill Descriptions note factors involved in the use of each skill, including other inherent skills and prerequisite knowledge. The Skill Descriptions are based on analyses of language arts and spelling textbooks commonly used in elementary schools.

Each Skill Description is followed by Assessment specifications, which include at least one Sample Item for each skill. These Sample Items are those actually used in the SES, with the following changes made for clarity in this presentation:

1. The correct answer is usually presented first to facilitate ease of description and reading. (In the SES, choices are randomly ordered.)

2. For consistency, items are generally presented in standard multiple-choice format, that is, with lettered choices listed under the stem. (In the SES, choices for grades 1 and 2 are not lettered; rather, students mark their answers directly on the test booklet. In grades 3-6, the lettering is somewhat different from that used here.)
3. Directions are included with each item. (In the SES for grades 1 and 2, directions are printed separately for the teacher to read to students; in addition, more specific instructions are provided; e.g., "Look at number __," "Look at the picture," "Read the words _____.")

The words for the directions and the items are taken from the vocabulary list provided by LAUSD (Taylor, Frackenpohl, and White, 1979). Only words listed at least one grade level below the level of assessment are used; e.g., the grade 1 assessment uses words from the preprimer level only; the grade 6 assessment uses words from the preprimer through fifth-grade level. However, two exceptions are made to this word-choice constraint:

1. Any words that students are familiar with orally are used in the directions for grades 1 and 2 since the teacher (not the students) reads those directions.
2. Critical technical terminology (primarily in the directions) is used when appropriate grade-level synonyms are not available, e.g., write, sentence, capitalize. Use of these words was approved by LAUSD. Students should know these words from school work in composition, although such technical terms generally do not occur in the stories in reading books, which serve as the basis for the EDL list. Such words are asterisked in this paper.

In addition, the Assessment specifications for each skill contain Item Descriptions, which discuss the construction of assessment items that are precise and appropriate (see also Humes, 1980a).

WORD PROCESSING

Word Processing skills focus on the use of individual words within the context of a sentence. The skills are closely related to skills in other categories, especially Sentence Processing, Spelling, and Mechanics in Writing.

WORD PROCESSING (w)	1	2	3	4	5	6
01. Identifies groups of letters as written words.						
02. Selects and uses nouns and pronouns appropriately.			x	x		
03. Selects and uses verbs appropriately.			x		x	
04. Selects and uses adjectives appropriately.		x				
05. Selects and uses adverbs appropriately.				x		
06. Constructs contractions from paired words and writes paired words from contractions.				x		
07. Constructs compound words from pairs of words and separates compound words.						
08. Uses and identifies possessive forms of words.						
09. Identifies and uses synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms.					x	
10. Forms new words by adding or deleting affixes.						
11. Selects and uses conjunctions appropriately.						
12. Selects and uses prepositions appropriately.		x				

Skill: C(w)01

Skill Statement: Identifies groups of letters as written words.

Comment: This skill is not identified by LAUSD for SES assessment,

Skill: C(w)02

Skill Statement: Selects and uses nouns and pronouns appropriately.

Grade: 3

Skill Description

Three aspects of noun and pronoun usage are assessed at this level:

(a) The student uses singular nouns to refer to one person or thing and plural nouns to refer to more than one person or thing. (Plurals are usually formed by adding -s or -es to the singular form.) The use of plurals that require modification of the root word (e.g., baby/babies, woman/women) and plurals that are the same as the singular form (e.g., deer/deer) is generally taught at higher grade levels and is not assessed here.

(b) The student uses singular pronouns to refer to one person or thing and plural pronouns to refer to more than one person or thing. The student uses the following personal pronouns appropriately with regard to number:

Singular: I, me, he, him, she, her, it.

Plural: we, us, they, them.

(c) The student uses pronouns that agree with their antecedents in gender: masculine, feminine, and neuter. The student uses the following personal pronouns appropriately with regard to gender:

Masculine: he, him.

Feminine: she, her.

Neuter: it.

Knowledge of grammatical terms is not prerequisite to this skill, nor is the ability to discriminate between nominative and objective forms of pronouns; this ability is assessed in grade 4.

Assessment

Comment: Three item types are used: type (a) for singular/plural nouns; type (b) for singular/plural pronouns; type (c) for pronoun gender.

C(w)02 (continued)

(a) Sample Items

Directions: Which word finishes the sentence*?

1. May I please have a _______ of milk?

A. glass
B. glasses

2. We have ten _______ to play with.

A. toys
B. toy

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence that unambiguously cues the target noun. Either an indefinite article (for singular nouns, item 1) or an adjective that describes quantity (for plurals, item 2) precedes a blank space where the assessed word belongs. The student selects the correct form of the noun from two choices. The distractor (choice B) is the corresponding plural/singular form.

(b) Sample Item

Directions: Which word finishes the sentence*?

The teacher was talking to both of ______.

A. us
B. me

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence that unambiguously cues the target pronoun. A quantity-describing adjective (e.g., only, all, both, etc.) precedes a blank space where the assessed word belongs. The student selects the correct pronoun from two choices. The distractor (choice B) is the corresponding singular/plural form.

(c) Sample Item

Directions: Which word finishes the sentence*?

Mary likes to run. ______ runs very fast.

A. She
B. He

C(w)02 (continued)

Item Description

Two related sentences provide the stimulus. The first sentence introduces a common male/female name. The second sentence contains a blank where the pronoun for the antecedent belongs. The student selects the correct pronoun from two choices. The distractor (choice B) is a pronoun of a gender other than that of the correct answer.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student uses nominative forms of pronouns as subjects and objective (accusative) forms as objects of verbs. With the exception of you and it, English personal pronouns have different forms for subject and object use: I-me, he-him, she-her, we-us, they-them.

Subject: $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{I}\\ \text{He}\\ \text{She}\\ \text{We}\\ \text{They}\end{array}\right\}$ went to the movies.

Object: Pat saw $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{me}\\ \text{him}\\ \text{her}\\ \text{us}\\ \text{them}\end{array}\right\}$.

In short sentences, as illustrated above, correct pronoun usage may not be difficult. However, pronouns in conjoined noun phrases seem to cause usage problems; e.g.:

Terry and I went to the movies. (Often: Terry and me.)

Pat saw Terry and me. (Sometimes: Terry and I--hypercorrection.)

Although objective forms can also be used as objects of prepositions, such usage is not assessed here. Moreover, two less common and more difficult pronoun-form uses are not included in this skill:

1. who and whom (Use of whom is unusual currently.)
2. Nominative forms after be; e.g., It is I. (Also uncommon currently.)

C(w)02 (continued)

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word completes the sentence?

1. Jim and Lucy are twins. _____ were born on the same day.

A. They
B. Them

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank space where the assessed pronoun belongs. The student selects the correct pronoun form from two choices. The distractor (choice B) differs from the correct answer only in nominative/objective form. It has the same number and gender as the target pronoun.

Skill: C(w)03

Skill Statement: Selects and uses verbs appropriately.

Grade: 3

Skill Description

The student uses the appropriate past tense forms of regular and irregular verbs. The past (and past participle) forms of regular verbs consist of the present tense form plus *-ed*. (This process sometimes entails dropping the final *e*, doubling the final consonant, or changing the final *y* to *i* before adding the suffix.) The past (and past participle) forms of irregular verbs involve various spelling and pronunciation changes from the present tense forms (e.g., *swim*, *swam*, *swum*).

Implicit in this skill are two fundamental levels of understanding. First, the student must be able to identify regular and irregular verbs. For example, the student must know that *work* forms both the past and past participle by adding *-ed*, but that *bring* does not. Second, the student must be able to supply the correct past form of the irregular verb, e.g., *brought* instead of *brang*.

While there are over 100 irregular verbs in the English language, students at this grade level should not be expected to know all of them. They should, however, be familiar with representative high-frequency samples from the irregular verb patterns explained below. (Although both past and past participle forms are listed here, only past forms are assessed at this grade level; past participles are assessed in grade 5.)

Pattern	Description
A. Verbs with same past and past participle forms:	
1. hit, hit, hit	All three forms are the same.
2. say, said, said have, had, had	The past and past participle end in *d*, but they are not formed through the regular suffixation process.
3. send, sent, sent build, built, built	The past and past participle are formed by changing the final *d* of the present to a *t*.

C(w)03 (continued)

Pattern	Description
4. bring, brought, brought feel, felt, felt	The past and past participle are formed (1) by changing the vowel and sometimes the final consonant of the present and (2) by adding a final *t*.
5. find, found, found hold, held, held sting, stung, stung	The past and past participle are formed by changing the vowel.
B. Verbs with three distinct forms:	
1. ring, rang, rung	The past is formed by changing the *i* of the present to an *a*; the past participle is formed by changing the vowel to a *u*.
2. grow, grew, grown shake, shook, shaken	The past is formed by changing the vowel of the present; the past participle is formed by adding -*n* or -*en* to the present.
3. speak, spoke, spoken freeze, froze, frozen	The past is formed by changing the vowel of the present; the past participle is formed by adding -*en* to the past.
C. Other irregular patterns;	
1. run, ran, run come, came, come	The past is formed by changing the vowel of the present; the past participle is the same as the present.
2. do, did, done go, went, gone am/is/are, was/were, been	These verbs are highly irregular and do not follow any of the patterns noted above.

These patterns are not intended to provide a comprehensive description of all irregular English verbs. They do, however, provide a framework for determining the appropriate content for assessment.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word finishes the sentence*?

C(w)03 (continued)

The flowers ______ because we watered them.

A. grew
B. growed
C. grewed

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentenced with a blank space where the assessed verb belongs. The student selects the correct verb form from three choices.

In addition to the correct answer (choice A), one distractor is formed by treating the irregular verb as if it were regular, adding an -ed to the present (choice B). The other distractor is the past form of the verb with the -ed suffix added (choice C).

The past participle form (e.g., grown) is not used as a distractor. Students are not required to discriminate between the simple past tense and the past participle until grade 5.

Grade: 5

Skill Description

The student uses past forms when no auxiliary precedes verbs and past participle forms when a form of the auxiliary verb have precedes the main verb; e.g.:

We went to the movies yesterday.
We have gone to the movies several times this month.

The distinction between past and past participle forms is only relevant for irregular verbs (see third grade assessment); for regular verbs, the two forms are identical; e.g.:

We rushed to the movies yesterday.
We have rushed to the movies several times this month.

Students should be able to use the most common irregular verbs correctly in their past and past participle forms. The following are frequently included in elementary school language arts instruction: came/come, did/done, gave/given, ran/run, rang/rung, saw/seen, spoke/spoken, threw/thrown, went/gone, wrote/written. Others occurring with some frequency in instruction include: ate/eaten, began/begun, broke/broken, chose/chosen, drank/drunk, fell/fallen, grew/grown, knew/known, rode/ridden, sang/sung, took/taken, tore/torn, wore/worn.

C(w)03 (continued)

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word completes the sentence?

Henry ______ two glasses of milk.

A. drank
B. drunk
C. drinked
D. dranked

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank space where the assessed verb belongs. The student selects the correct verb form (choice A) from four choices.

When the target verb is in the past tense (as in the sample item), one distractor is the past participle of the verb (choice B). When the past participle is assessed, one distractor is the simple past of the verb.

Other distractors are formed by attaching the *-ed* suffix to the present-tense form of the verb (choice C) and to the past or past participle form (choice D).

Skill: C(w)04

Skill Statement: Selects and uses adjectives appropriately.

Grade: 2

Skill Description

The student uses appropriate adjectives to modify nouns. At this level, the student understands that adjectives are used to describe qualities of size, shape, sense, order, number, etc. Two types of adjective placement are common to second grade instruction: (1) The adjective immediately precedes the noun it modifies (e.g., the big house); (2) The adjective forms a part of the predicate (e.g., The house is big). The use of comparative and superlative adjectives is not commonly taught at this level and is not assessed here.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which word completes the sentence?

1. [picture: two dogs; a large black dog and a small white dog]

   The _______ dog is black.

   A. big
   B. little
   C. hard

2. [picture: camp fire]

   A fire is _______.

   A. hot
   B. cold
   C. some

Item Description

The stimulus is a picture and a simple sentence that refers to the picture. A blank is placed where an adjective belongs. The student selects the correct adjective (choice A) from three choices.

C(w)04 (continued)

Item 1 is an example of an adjective immediately preceding the noun it modifies. Item 2 shows the target word as a predicate adjective.

The adjectives to be assessed refer to observable qualities. Number words, however, are not used since their assessment entails a mathematical task (e.g., six eggs).

Both distractors for this skill are adjectives. One (choice B) is the opposite of the assessed word; the other (choice C) is an adjective that does not normally describe the noun being modified.

Distractors must be carefully chosen so that they are not possible answers; e.g., funny cannot be used for item 1 because, although unlikely, it might be an interpretation of the picture.

Skill: C(w)05

Skill Statement: Selects and uses adverbs appropriately.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student uses adverbs rather than adjectives to modify verbs in sentences. The student also uses the comparative adverb form when comparing two people, things, events, or qualities, and uses the superlative adverb form when comparing three or more events or qualities.

Comparative and superlative adverbs are generally formed by preceding the adverb with more or most, respectively (e.g., more easily, most sadly). A few adverbs, however, show degrees of comparison by adding the suffixes -er and -est (e.g., faster, soonest).

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which word completes the sentence?

1. The man walked ________ up the street.

   A. slowly
   B. slow

2. María runs ________ than Pat.

   A. faster
   B. fast
   C. fastest

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank placed where the assessed adverb belongs. The student selects the correct word from two or three choices.

Item 1 assesses the selection of a common adverb that ends in -ly (students at this level are often taught that many adverbs end in -ly). The distractor is the corresponding adjective. Only one distractor is provided for this item type because other suffixed forms of the root word frequently create a grammatically correct segment (e.g., The man walked slower . . .).

C(w)05 (continued)

Item 2 assesses the student's knowledge of comparative/superlative adverb forms. The distractors for this item type are the corresponding adjective (choice B) and the adverb that differs in degree from the target word (choice C).

Skill: C(w)06

Skill Statement: Constructs contractions from paired words and writes paired words from contractions.

Grade: 4

Skill Statement

The student generates a contraction from two words and generates the appropriate uncontracted words when given a contraction. The student understands that a contraction is a word made up of two words that are combined into one in which an apostrophe takes the place of one or more letters.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which word is correct for the underlined words?

1. She is a very good worker.

   A. She's
   B. Shes'
   C. Sh'es
   D. Shes

Directions: Which words are correct for the underlined word?

2. My dog isn't here today

   A. is not
   B. will not
   C. can not
   D. did not

Item Description

Two separate operations are included in this assessment. Item 1 assesses the student's ability to select the appropriate contracted form when given two paired words. The stimulus is a sentence with the paired words underlined. The student selects the correct answer (choice A) from four choices. The distractors are two contractions with misplaced apostrophes (choices B and C) and the contracted form of the word without an apostrophe (choice D).

Item 2 assesses the student's ability to select the paired words when given a contraction. The stimulus is a sentence with the contraction underlined. The student selects the

C(w)06 (continued)

correct answer (choice A) from four choices. The distractors are word pairs that employ one of the correct segments of the correct answer and that do have contracted forms.

Skill: C(w)07

Skill Statement: Constructs compound words from pairs of words and separates compound words.

Comment: This skill is not assessed here since it is essentially covered by Skill C(sp)10: Identifies and spells compound words.

Skill: C(w)08

Skill Statement: Uses and identifies possessive forms of words.

Comment: This skill is not assessed here since it is essentially covered by Skill C(m)21: Uses apostrophe in singular and plural possessive forms.

Skill: C(w)09

Skill Statement: Identifies and uses synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms.

Grade: 5

Skill Deacription

The student uses words that have the same or a similar meaning (synonyms), words that have opposite meanings (antonyms), and words that sound the same, but that have different spellings and different meanings (homophones).

Comment: While the Skill Statement refers to the assessment of *homonyms* (words that sound the same, but that have different meanings), assessment is limited to the use of *homophones* (homonyms that have different spellings).

Synonym and antonym use has a number of purposes, which include (1) avoiding repetition, (2) replacing common hackneyed words, and (3) obtaining more precision in word use.

The identification and use of homophones is essentially a spelling skill that is difficult for many students because the spelling cannot be predicted on the basis of sound or rules alone, but is dependent upon meaning as well. Students must depend upon memory (or a dictionary) to choose the correct homophone.

The following is a list of homophones that are commonly taught prior to the end of the fifth grade:

ate - eight
beat - beet
blue - blew
break - brake
by - buy
dear - deer
die - dye
flower - flour
for - four
hall - haul
heal - heel
heard - herd
here - hear
hole - whole
made - maid
male - mail
meet - meat
new - knew
no - know
our - hour
pail - pale
pain - pane
pair - pear

piece - peace
right - write
ring - wring
road - rode
root - route
sail - sale
see - sea
sent - cent
so - sew
soar - sore
steal - steel
sun - son
tale - tail
there - their - they're
threw - through
to - too - two
tow - toe
wait - weight
weather - whether
week - weak
won - one
wood - would

C(w)09 (continued)

Assessment

Comment: Three item types are used: type (a) for synonyms, type (b) for antonyms, type (c) for homophones.

(a) Sample Item

Directions: Which word means the same as the underlined word?

The farmer let her cows eat in the pasture.

A. graze
B. live
C. walk

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence in which the target word is underlined. The student selects the synonym for the underlined word from three choices. The distractors are words that can form a grammatically correct sentence when used in place of the target word, but that change the meaning of the sentence.

(b) Sample Item

Directions: Which word completes the sentence?

Eric is not happy. He is _____.

A. sad
B. glad
C. funny

Item Description

The stimulus consists of two sentences. The first sentence is a distinctly negative or positive statement. The second sentence is the obverse of the first, with a blank placed where the antonym belongs. The student selects the correct answer from three choices. In addition to the correct answer, two distractors are provided. Choice B is a synonym for the stimulus word in the first sentence (e.g., happy-glad). Choice C is more distantly related to the same word (e.g., happy-funny).

C(w)09 (continued)

(c) Sample Item

Directions: Which word completes the sentence?

Mike and Amy invited us to go to _____ house for dinner.

A. their
B. there
C. they're

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank placed where the target word belongs. The student selects the correct answer from two or more choices. (Since most homophones have only two alternate spellings, the number of answer choices will usually be only two). The distractors are the homophones for the target word.

Skill: C(w)10

Skill Statement: Forms new words by adding or deleting affixes.

Comment: This skill is not identified by LAUSD for SES assessment. However, it is essentially covered by the following spelling skills:

C(sp)08: Forms plurals by adding s and es.

C(sp)09: Spells and writes new words by adding endings s, ed, ing to base words.

C(sp)14: Identifies and spells words, using derivations: prefixes.

C(sp)22: Identifies and spells words by changing words to adjectives by adding -able and/or -ful.

C(sp)23: Identifies and spells words by changing root words through adding noun-forming endings (e.g., -er, -ness, -tion).

C(sp)24: Identifies and spells words by changing root words through adding the adverb-forming ending ly.

C(sp)26: Changes the spelling and/or sound of a root word when adding certain suffixes (e.g., musician, instruction).

Skill: C(w)11

Skill Statement: Selects and uses conjunctions appropriately.

Comment: This skill is not assessed here since it is essentially covered by Skill C(s)09: Combines simple sentences to form compound and complex sentences.

Skill: C(w)12

Skill Statement: Selects and uses prepositions appropriately.

Grade: 3

Skill Description

The student uses a preposition to show the relationship between two nouns in a sentence. At this level, the student does not necessarily know what prepositions are, but uses them as function words in writing.

While many prepositions express relationships other than direction or location, they are difficult to assess with a simple format. Therefore, the present assessment is limited to those prepositions relating to direction and location.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word completes the sentence?

[picture: cat on top of bed]

The cat is _____ the bed.

A. on
B. by
C. after

Item Description

The stimulus is a picture and a simple sentence that refers to the picture. A blank is placed where a preposition belongs. The student selects the correct preposition from three choices.

The preposition to be assessed expresses either direction or location. The two distractors are prepositions that either are inappropriate within the context of the sentence or express a relationship between the two nouns that is not correct in relationship to the picture.

SENTENCE PROCESSING

Sentence Processing skills pertain to the construction and use of complete sentences, to the relation between words in sentences, and to the terminology for labeling the grammatical parts of sentences.

SENTENCE PROCESSING (s)	1	2	3	4	5	6
01. Demonstrates understanding of word order in a sentence.	x					
02. Identifies or copies a simple sentence, title, or caption.	x					
03. Writes a simple sentence independently.						
04. Identifies and writes declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative sentences.				x		
05. Constructs and identifies sentences in which the subject and verb agree.			x			
06. Expands simple sentences through the use of modifiers.		x				
07. Manipulates sentences through use of transformation.		x		x		
08. Identifies parts of sentences (e.g., subject/predicate).					x	x
09. Combines simple sentences to form compound and complex sentences.					x	
10. Demonstrates the ability to substitute parts of speech (e.g., pronoun for noun).				x		
11. Identifies and uses relative clauses that begin with who, which, and that.						x
12. Unscrambles simple sentences.						
13. Demonstrates ability to recall or retell a story in sequence.						

Skill: E(s)01

Skill Statement: Demonstrates understanding of word order in a sentence.

Grade: 1

Skill Description

The student recognizes that word order affects the meaning of standard English sentences and that word order can determine whether or not a group of words is actually a sentence. At this grade level, the student should understand sentences with the following patterns:

(1) subject-verb
(2) subject-verb-direct object
(3) subject-verb-prepositional phrase
(4) subject-linking verb-predicate adjective/noun
(5) subject-verb-adverb

Knowledge of these grammatical terms is not prerequisite to this skill, nor is the ability to identify sentence parts. However, knowledge of word order in noun phrases (e.g., article-adjective-noun) is required.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which group of words is a good sentence that tells about the picture?

1. [picture: two cars traveling on a road: the cars are moving away from the observer]

A. The cars go.
B. Cars the go.

2. [picture: boy building a toy airplane]

A. He makes a toy.
B. Makes a toy he.

3. [picture: boy running to house]

A. He runs to the house.
B. Runs house to he the.

E(s)01 (continued)

4. [picture: a large ball, next to which stands a girl; the girl and the ball are approximately the same height]

   A. The ball is big.
   B. The is big ball.

5. [picture: man jumping]

   A. He jumps up.
   B. Jumps he up.

Item Description

A picture stimulus unambiguously portrays subjects and activities that should be familiar to students. The picture stimulus is used to minimize the reading requirement. The student selects the sentence that describes the picture. The correct response (choice A) is a simple sentence in subject-verb order (item 1), subject-verb-direct object order (item 2) subject-verb-prepositional phrase order (item 3), subject-linking verb-predicate adjective order (item 4), or subject-verb-adverb order (item 5).

Distractors are "scrambled" versions of the word order of the correct responses, and they are clearly not sentences. At this grade level, only two answer choices are used so that the reading task does not inappropriately increase the difficulty of the items.

The use of the simple present tense conforms to students' reading ability at this grade level. Although the present continuous tense would seem more natural (e.g., The cars are going), first grade students might have difficulty reading some inflected forms, e.g., going.

Skill: C(s)02

Skill Statement: Identifies or copies a simple sentence, title, or caption.

Grade: 1

Skill Description

Comment: The skill statement suggests two distinct tasks (identifying and copying) covering three different types of content (simple sentences, titles, and captions). However, only the identification of simple sentences is relevant to SES assessment. Therefore, the other dimensions of this skill statement are not covered in the specifications below.

The student discriminates between a simple sentence and a group of unrelated words. At this grade level, the student's ability to identify sentences is likely to be based on recognition of semantic "completeness" rather than on knowledge of grammar and syntax. That is, the student recognizes a sentence as a group of words that expresses a complete thought ("says something"), rather than as a subject-predicate construction with particular grammatical and syntactic features.

This skill is distinguished from a similar higher-level skill: identification of sentences vs. sentence fragments. In later grades, students learn to discriminate between complete sentences and parts (fragments) of sentences (e.g., subordinate clauses, noun phrases). However, students at this level are not required to make such fine distinctions. In fact, first-grade students are likely to identify (and punctuate/capitalize) any semantically unified structure as a sentence; e.g.:

The large brown dog. (noun phrase)
Was running. (verb phrase)
In the park. (prepositional phrase)

Thus assessment of this skill has very narrow limits at this grade level. The student can be asked to identify a simple sentence, but only when that sentence is contrasted with a word group that is clearly not a sentence or sentence element.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which group of words is a sentence?

C(s)02 (continued)

1. A. The car is blue.
   B. Airplane fast little.

2. A. You can jump.
   B. Funny yes green.

Item Description

Given two word groups (each capitalized and punctuated as a sentence), the student identifies the group that comprises a sentence (choice A). Distractors are strings of unrelated words. Any nouns that are included in the distractors are positioned so that the word group does not appear to be a noun phrase; e.g., "Airplane fast little" is used rather than "Fast little airplane."

Comment: These constraints on the construction of distractors are designed to limit the difficulty of the items. If more difficult items are desired, the distractors can be revised to resemble sentence elements (e.g., verb phrases, noun phrases). However, identification of sentences is generally not taught in textbooks at this grade level. Therefore, more difficult items may unfairly assess beyond learned skills.

Skill: C(s)03

Skill Statement: Writes a simple sentence independently.

Comment: This skill is not identified by LAUSD for SES assessment. However, the writing samples for grades 3 and 6 permit students to write simple sentences independently.

Skill: C(s)04

Skill Statement: Identifies and writes declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative sentences.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

Comment: The skill statement suggests two distinct tasks: identifying and writing. However, the latter task is not feasible within the current SES design. Thus, only the identification task is discussed in the specifications below.

The student identifies four sentence types, which are characterized by the features explained below.

(1) Declarative sentences are statements that end with a period (e.g., The doctor is here.).

(2) Interrogative sentences are sentences that ask a question and end with a question mark (e.g., Who is your doctor?). Interrogative sentences are often distinguished by their inverted word order or by the presence of a wh word (e.g., who, what). However, sentences that are structurally declarative may be transformed into questions simply by changing their terminal punctuation (e.g., The doctor is here?).

(3) Exclamatory sentences are sentences that end with an exclamation point (e.g., I need a doctor!). Generally, exclamatory sentences express strong emotion, but they are not distinguished by any particular structural characteristics. Sentences that are structurally declarative, interrogative, or imperative can be transformed into exclamatory sentences by changing the terminal punctuation; e.g.:

I need a doctor! (declarative structure)
What are you doing! (interrogative structure)
Call a doctor! (imperative structure)

(4) Imperative sentences are sentences that express a command or polite request (e.g., Please call a doctor). Imperative sentences are punctuated with a period and are distinguished by their structure: the subject, you, is usually not stated.

C(s)04 (continued)

Identification of the first three types essentially involves identification of terminal punctuation. However, punctuation of sentence types is not included in this skill. Terminal punctuation is assessed elsewhere in the SES (see Skills C(m)12, 13, and 19). Furthermore, knowledge of the technical terms declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative is not prerequisite to this skill.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which sentence is a telling sentence?

1. A. Maria knows the answer.
   B. Tell Maria the answer.
   C. Does Maria know the answer?

Directions: Which sentence is a question?

2. A. Who is your doctor?
   B. Call a doctor!
   C. The doctor is here.

Directions: Which sentence shows strong feeling?

3. A. The money is gone!
   B. Where is the money?
   C. The money is in the safe.

Directions: Which sentence gives an order to do something?

4. A. Put your shoes in the closet.
   B. Your shoes are in the closet.
   C. Are your shoes in the closet?

Item Description

The stimulus is a set of three sentences dealing with similar content. The student identifies a declarative ("telling") sentence in item 1, an interrogative sentence ("question") in item 2, an exclamatory sentence ("showing strong feeling") in item 3, and an imperative sentence ("giving an order to do something") in item 4. Distractors are two other sentence types, properly capitalized and punctuated. For declarative and imperative sentences, one distractor (choice B) is of the other type so that two choices end with periods. For interrogative and exclamatory sentences, one distractor is of the other type so that two choices end with punctuation other than a period.

Skill: C(s)05

Skill Statement: Constructs and identifies sentences in which the subject and verb agree.

Grade: 3

Skill Description

The student constructs sentences in which the subject and verb agree in number and person. At this grade level, the subject and the verb are adjacent so that the connection is easier to determine; e.g., agreement should be easier in The cars are stopping than in The cars on the road are stopping, where the singular noun in the phrase on the road may interrupt the relationship between the plural subject (cars) and the verb (are).

Agreement is primarily in present-tense verb forms:

1. -s or -es form with third person singular subjects (i.e., he, she, it, and singular nouns);
2. root (base, uninflected) form with all other subjects (i.e., I, you, we, they, and plural nouns).

The verb be has a greater number of forms, including past-tense agreement forms:

1. present tense
   am: first person singular subjects (i.e., I)
   is: third person singular subjects
   are: all other subjects
2. past tense
   was: first and third person singular subjects
   were: all other subjects

Knowledge of grammatical terminology is not prerequisite to this skill.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Think about how you write* in school. Which word should you use when you write* in school?

1. The chickens ________ bigger every day.

   A. grow
   B. grows

C(s)05 (continued)

2. My brother ________ sick today.

A. is
B. am
C. are

Item Description

The stimulus is a simple declarative sentence with a blank replacing the verb. The subject and verb are adjacent. The student selects the correct verb form that agrees with the subject.

Comment: Speakers of dialects other than Standard English may have difficulty with this skill. Therefore, the directions specify that the student is to choose the word that is correct "when you write in school."

In item 1, only two answer choices are appropriate (i.e., the root form and the -s form of the verb). In item 2, three answer choices are used because the verb be has more agreement forms.

Skill: C(s)06

Skill Statement: Expands simple sentences through the use of modifiers.

Grade: 2

Skill Description

The student expands a given sentence by adding an adjective to modify a noun in the original sentence. The student knows that an adjective normally precedes the noun that it modifies. The purpose of expanding sentences is to describe entities/objects more precisely and to provide interest and sentence variety in writing.

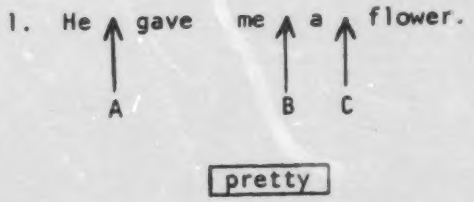
> Comment: The skill statement does not specify the particular types of modifiers to be used by students. However, textbook instruction at this level rarely covers any modifiers other than adjectives. More complex modifiers (e.g., phrases, subordinate clauses) are not appropriate for second-grade students.

Knowledge of grammatical terminology is not prerequisite to this skill.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Read the sentence. Where does the word pretty go in the sentence?



Item Description

The stimulus for the item is a simple sentence. The student identifies the correct position (choice C) for a given adjective. Distractors are other (clearly inappropriate) positions in the sentence.

> Comment: This assessment focuses on the correct position of the modifier in the sentence. The selection of appropriate adjectives (which is essentially a vocabulary skill) is assessed under Skill C(w)04: Selects and uses adjectives appropriately.

Skill: C(s)07

Skill Statement: Manipulates sentences through use of transformation.

Grade: 2

Skill Description

At this level, the student transforms declarative sentences into interrogative sentences. The transformation involves simple inversion of word order and does not require the use of do or the use of interrogative pronouns and adverbs (e.g., who, what, where).

Two types of transformation by inversion are included in this skill. The first pertains to sentences containing the simple present and past forms of be (e.g., The kitten is lost. → Is the kitten lost?). The rule for this transformation can be stated as follows: subject + be + complement → be + subject + complement.

The second type of transformation involves sentences that contain auxiliary verbs (e.g., Ted can play. → Can Ted play?). This rule can be stated: subject + auxiliary + main verb → auxiliary + subject + main verb.

Comment: The terminal punctuation also undergoes a change in these two transformations. However, terminal punctuation is covered by separate skills in the SES and is not assessed here (see Skills C(m)12 and 13).

Knowledge of the terms declarative, interrogative, inversion, and transformation is not prerequisite to this skill, but knowledge of the term question is required.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Read the sentence. The sentence must be changed into a question. Which question is right?

1. The kitten is lost.

A. Is the kitten lost?
B. The kitten lost is?
C. Is lost the kitten?

C(s)07 (continued)

2. Ted can play.

   A. Can Ted play?
   B. Play can Ted?
   C. Can play Ted?

Item Description

The stimulus for these items is a simple declarative sentence following the pattern subject + be + complement (item 1) or subject + auxiliary + main verb (item 2). The student selects the interrogative sentence that is the correct transformation of the item stimulus (choice A).

The distractors for item 1 follow two patterns:

(1) subject + complement + be (choice B)
(2) be + complement + subject (choice C)

Distractors for item 2 follow these two patterns:

(1) main verb + auxiliary + subject (choice B)
(2) auxiliary + main verb + subject (choice C)

These distractors should provide attractive alternatives for students who might recognize that inversion does take place in interrogative sentences, but who might not understand the exact word order which must result from this inversion. One distractor type, however, should not be used. A declarative sentence can be changed to an interrogative sentence simply by changing the terminal punctuation to a question mark (e.g., Ted can play?). Sentences of this type are clearly not appropriate distractors.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

At this grade level, the student transforms declarative sentences that do not contain an auxiliary verb into interrogative sentences by inserting forms of the verb do (e.g., She likes basketball. → Does she like basketball?), and transforms interrogative sentences containing forms of do into declarative sentences (e.g., Did Albert take some candy? → Albert took some candy.).

Two steps are required to transform declarative sentences into interrogative sentences using do support. First the verb do is inserted into the declarative sentence where it assumes the tense

C(s)07 (continued)

(and person/number) of the main verb (e.g., She likes basketball. → She does like basketball.) Second, the inflected form of do is moved to the initial position (e.g., She does like basketball. → Does she like basketball?). The rule for this transformation can be stated as follows:

subject + main verb (with tense/person/number marker) →
subject + do (with tense/person/number marker) + main verb →
do (with tense/person/number marker) + subject + main verb.

The transformation from interrogative to declarative reverses the process outlined above. First the verb do is shifted from the initial position to a position between the subject and main verb (e.g., Did Albert take some candy? → Albert did take some candy). Next, the tense/person/number marker is shifted from do to the main verb, and do is deleted from the sentence (e.g., Albert did take some candy. → Albert took some candy). The rule for this transformation can be stated as follows:

do (with tense/person/number marker) + subject + main verb →
subject + do (with tense/person/number marker) + main verb →
subject + main verb (with tense/person/number marker).

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: This telling sentence can be made into a question. Which question is right?

1. She likes to play basketball.

A. Does she like to play basketball?
B. Likes she to play basketball?
C. Do she likes to play basketball?

Directions: This question can be made into a telling sentence. Which telling sentence is right?

2. Did Albert take some candy?

A. Albert took some candy.
B. Albert do took some candy.
C. Albert did took some candy.

C(s)07 (continued)

Item Description

The stimulus for item 1 is a simple declarative sentence that does not contain an auxiliary verb or a form of be. The student selects the interrogative sentence (choice A) that is the correct transformation of the stimulus. Distractors follow two patterns:

(1) Choice B follows this pattern: main verb (with tense/person/number marker) + subject. Students who choose this distractor may not even realize that this transformation requires the use of the verb do. They may view all interrogative transformations as simple inversions of word order (see Skill Description for grade 2 above).

(2) Choice C follows this pattern: do + subject + main verb (with tense/person/number marker). Students who choose this distractor may realize that do is inserted in the sentence and that it is shifted to the initial position, but they do not transfer the tense/person/number marker from the main verb to do. The plural present tense is not used in the stimulus since this distractor type will be a legitimate interrogative sentence (e.g., They like to play basketball. → Do they like to play basketball?).

The stimulus for item 2 is an interrogative sentence containing do. The student selects the declarative sentence (choice A) that is the correct transformation of the stimulus. Distractors follow two patterns:

(3) Choice B follows this pattern: subject + do + main verb (with tense/person/number marker). Students who select this distractor have improperly shifted the marker from do to the main verb without deleting do from the sentence.

(4) Choice C follows this pattern: subject + do (with tense/person/number marker) + main verb (with tense/person/number marker). Students who select this distractor may recognize that the marker is shifted to the main verb, but they incorrectly retain the inflected form of do in the sentence.

Two distractor types are not used for item 2. First is this pattern: subject + do (with tense/person/number marker) + main verb (e.g., Albert did take some candy). This is a legitimate declarative sentence even though it is technically not the correct transformation of the interrogative sentence.

C(s)07 (continued)

(The do in "Albert did take some candy" is generally viewed as emphatic, whereas the do in "Did Albert take some candy?" is simply a "dummy" verb whose sole function is to carry the marker.)

The second distractor type that is not used is this pattern: subject + main verb (e.g., Albert take some candy). This distractor places an inappropriate emphasis on skills of subject-verb agreement, which are assessed elsewhere in the SES (see skill C(s)09).

Skill: C(s)08

Skill Statement: Identifies parts of sentences (e.g., subject/predicate).

Grade: 5

Skill Description

The student identifies a word or phrase as either the subject or predicate of a sentence. Generally, the subject is the entity about which something is stated in the sentence. The predicate is the part of the sentence that expresses what is said about the subject.

Subjects may be single words or noun phrases (i.e., nouns and their preceding/following modification); e.g.:

Molly is a giraffe.
S

The tall animal with a long neck is a giraffe.
S

Modifiers can include adjectives, determiners, phrases (prepositional and verbal), and clauses.

The predicate is usually anything that comes after the subject. The predicate may consist of a single verb or a verb phrase (auxiliary verbs and the main verb) plus objects (direct/indirect), predicate adjectives/nouns, adverbs, and adverbial phrases or clauses; e.g.:

The children slept.
P

The children were eating lunch in the classroom.
P

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which part of the sentence is the subject*?

1. Gloria likes to study.
A B

Directions: Which part of the sentence is the predicate*?

2. The man on the porch saw the accident.
A B

C(s)08 (continued)

Item Description

The stimulus is a simple declarative sentence. Subjects and predicates are most easily identified in declarative sentences (and in exclamatory sentences that are similar in structure to declarative sentences; e.g., The jewels are gone!). In interrogative sentences, the predicate is usually interrupted by the subject, thus making identification more difficult; e.g.:

$$\underset{P}{\underline{\text{Do}}}\quad \underset{S}{\underline{\text{all those people}}}\quad \underset{P}{\underline{\text{like ice cream}}}\text{?}$$

Therefore, interrogative sentences are not used for assessing this skill. Imperative sentences are also not used because they do not contain an explicit subject.

Complex sentences are not used in these items because they would inappropriately increase the item difficulty. Since subordinate clauses also contain subjects and predicates, complex sentences would likely cause confusion for students.

The sentences are divided into their subject and predicate parts, which are underlined and lettered. The student selects the letter corresponding to the subject (in item 1) or the predicate (in item 2).

Comment: English word order dictates that the subject must generally precede the predicate. Thus choice A will always be the subject, and choice B will always be the predicate. (Inverted word order in declarative sentences is uncommon and is generally used for poetic effect; e.g., "Happy was I.") Consequently, students may respond correctly without actually "identifying" the subject or predicate.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

At this grade level, the student identifies the following sentence parts: direct object, prepositional phrase, and object of preposition. These are explained below.

(a) The direct object is the receiver of the action performed by the subject of the sentence. The direct object, usually a noun, a noun phrase, or a pronoun, generally follows the verb in an English sentence.

C(s)08 (continued)

Comment: Infinitives, gerunds, and noun clauses can also be used as direct objects; e.g.:

I like to eat ice cream.
I like eating ice cream.
I know that you like ice cream.

However, students at this level should not be required to identify verbals or clauses as direct objects.

(b) A prepositional phrase functions as an adverbial or adjectival modifier in a sentence. A preposition is a function word that establishes a relationship between its object and the word that the prepositional phrase modifies; e.g.:

We watched television after dinner. (adverbial prepositional phrase modifying watched)

The woman in the picture is a doctor. (adjectival prepositional phrase modifying woman)

Comment: Students at this level should not be required to identify the function of a prepositional phrase (i.e., adverbial or adjectival). However, both types of phrases may be included in assessment.

(c) Objects of prepositions are usually nouns or pronouns. Although gerunds can also function as objects of prepositions (e.g., They succeeded by working hard), students should not be required to identify verbals as objects at this level.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which word in the sentence is the direct object?

1. I brought my dog to school.
A B C D

Directions: Which part of the sentence is a prepositional* phrase*?

2. Andy and I are making some cookies for the party.
A B C D

C(s)08 (continued)

Directions: Which word in the sentence is the object of a preposition*?

3. On his head he wore a baseball cap.
A: head B: wore C: baseball D: cap

Item Description

The stimuli for these items are simple declarative sentences with words or phrases underlined and lettered. The student identifies a direct object in item 1, a prepositional phrase in item 2, and an object of a preposition in item 3. These items are explained individually below.

(1) The correct response to item 1 is the direct object dog (choice C). Distractors are a subject (I), a verb (brought), and an object of a preposition (school). Generally, distractors are "major" words in the sentence (i.e., nouns, pronouns, verbs) rather than modifiers or function words.

Comment: Although textbooks generally teach identification of direct objects by this grade level, LAUSD did not approve this item for the 1980 SES. Therefore, an item assessing the identification of a subject phrase was substituted at this grade level even though subject identification is also assessed at fifth grade.

(2) The correct response to item 2 is the prepositional phrase for the party. Distractors are a subject noun phrase (Andy and I), a verb phrase (are making), and an object noun phrase (some cookies). All distractors are multiple-word structures, and one distractor (choice A) contains the same number of words as the correct response so that the length of the prepositional phrase does not provide an inappropriate clue to the correct response.

(3) The correct response to item 3 is head, the object of the preposition on. Distractors are other "major" words in the sentence (i.e., nouns and verbs). The preposition itself is not used as an answer choice because it might be confusing for students.

Skill: C(s)09

Skill Statement: Combines simple sentences to form compound and complex sentences.

Grade: 5

Skill Description

Comment: Complex sentences are usually not taught in elementary textbooks at this grade level. Consequently, only compound sentences are included in SES assessment at fifth grade.

The student joins two clauses with and, but, or or to make a compound sentence. The use of compound sentences facilitates sentence variety and eliminates the awkwardness resulting from excessive use of short, choppy sentences.

Comment: Other coordinating conjunctions such as nor, for, so, and yet can be used to construct compound sentences. However, these words are not generally taught as conjunctions at the elementary level.

The three types of compound sentences recommended for assessment at this level correspond to the three conjunctions noted above:

(1) addition (and) - one clause is added to the other (e.g., The air was cold, and the snow was deep);

(2) contrast (but) - one clause is contrasted with the other (e.g., Juan was happy, but Susan was sad);

(3) alternative (or) - one clause is the alternative of the other (e.g., He must obey the law, or he will be punished).

Compound sentences usually require a comma to separate the clauses. However, punctuation of compound sentences is not assessed here.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which is the best way to put the two sentences together?

C(s)09

1. The air was cold. The snow was deep.

   A. The air was cold, and the snow was deep.
   B. The air was cold, the snow was deep.
   C. The air was cold, or the snow was deep.

2. Juan was happy. Susan was sad.

   A. Juan was happy, but Susan was sad.
   B. Juan was happy, then Susan was sad.
   C. Juan was happy, or Susan was sad.

3. He must obey the law. He will be punished.

   A. He must obey the law, or he will be punished.
   B. He must obey the law, soon he will be punished.
   C. He must obey the law, and he will be punished.

Item Description

The stimuli for these items are pairs of related sentences. The student selects the compound sentence (choice A) that logically joins the two related sentences. Distractors are of two types:

(1) Choice B is a run-on sentence (comma splice) that joins the two clauses without an appropriate conjunction. In item 1, the clauses are simply run together as one sentence. In items 2 and 3, the second clause is introduced by an adverb (then and soon, respectively). Thus choice B is incorrect both grammatically and logically.

(2) Choice C is grammatically correct in that the two clauses are joined by a coordinating conjunction. However, the logical relationship of the two clauses is not correctly expressed by the conjunction. Choice C will likely be the more difficult of the two distractors because it requires the student to infer the relationship between the clauses.

Comment: In the first two types of compound sentences, the relationships are fairly obvious. However, the alternative (or) relationship can be more difficult because it largely depends on real-world knowledge. For example, in item 3, the student must know that punishment is the logical alternative to disobeying the law.

Skill: C(s)10

Skill Statement: Demonstrates ability to substitute parts of speech (e.g., pronoun for noun).

Grade: 4

Skill Description

Comment: The skill statement suggests that part-of-speech substitutions other than pronoun for noun are possible. However, this is the only substitution that is ordinarily used in standard English.

The student substitutes a pronoun for a given noun in a sentence. The purpose of such substitutions is to avoid monotonous repetition of noun phrases (e.g., After I read the book, I put the book back on the shelf). The student selects the appropriate pronoun that agrees with its noun referent in terms of number and gender.

Comment: In actual writing, the substitution also depends on the case of the pronoun. However, the use of subject and object pronoun forms is covered elsewhere in the SES (see Skill C(w)02) and is not assessed here.

Knowledge of the technical terms pronoun, referent, number, and gender is not prerequisite to this skill.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which word can take the place of the underlined word or words?

1. Susan studied very hard before Susan went to bed.

   A. she
   B. it
   C. he
   D. they

2. The boys and girls are hungry. I will give the boys and girls some food.

   A. them
   B. him
   C. it
   D. her

C(s)10 (continued)

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence (or sentences) in which one noun phrase is repeated. The second occurrence of the noun phrase is underlined, and the student selects the appropriate pronoun substitute (choice A) for the noun phrase.

Distractors are other (incorrect) pronouns. The distractors are of the same case as the correct response. For example, the correct response to item 1 is a subject pronoun form (she); thus the distractors are also subject forms. Moreover, all answer choices are third person pronouns so that the task does not become confusing for students. For example, if us were used as an answer choice in item 2, students might have difficulty selecting the correct response; e.g.:

> The boys and girls are hungry. I will give them/us some food.

Any personal names used in the item stimulus (see item 1) should be unambiguous in gender. For example, Susan is clearly a female name, but Pat is not.

Skill: C(s)11

Skill Statement: Identifies and uses relative clauses that begin with who, which, and that.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

Comment: The skill statement suggests two separate tasks, identifying and using. However, only the use of relative clauses is included in SES assessment. Identification of relative clauses is not commonly taught in elementary textbooks.

The student uses relative clauses to combine sentences. A relative clause functions as an adjectival modifier, describing a noun in the main clause. Relative clauses are introduced by relative pronouns (which are limited to who, which, and that at this grade level). Knowledge of the grammatical term relative clause is not implicit in this skill.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which is the best way to put these sentences together?

1. The woman won the race. The woman was very happy.

   A. The woman who won the race was very happy.
   B. The woman, she won the race, was very happy.
   C. The woman won the race was very happy.

2. Eric read the book. The book was on the desk.

   A. Eric read the book that was on the desk.
   B. Eric read the book, it was on the desk.
   C. Eric read the book, which it was on the desk.

Item Description

The stimulus is a pair of related sentences; a noun phrase in the first sentence is repeated in the second sentence. The student selects the answer choice in which the two sentences are combined correctly using a relative clause (choice A). In item 1, the relative clause (who won the race) modifies a subject noun (woman). In item 2, the relative clause (that was on the desk) modifies an object noun (book).

C(s)11 (continued)

Distractors are ungrammatical constructions in which the two sentences are improperly joined. Choice B in both items includes the second sentence in the modifying position, but with the repeated noun replaced by a personal pronoun. Choice C also includes the second sentence in the modifying position, but either with no pronoun (item 1) or with both the relative and the personal pronouns (item 2).

Comment: Some authorities suggest that that be used to introduce restrictive relative clauses, and that which be reserved for non-restrictive relative clauses; e.g.:

> The door that led to the stairs was closed.
> The door, which led to the stairs, was closed.

However, this practice is not universally accepted. Therefore, students are not required to discriminate between the use of which and that.

Skill: C(s)12

Skill Statement: Unscrambles simple sentences.

Grade: 1

Comment: This skill is not identified by LAUSD for SES assessment. However, it is assessed by Skill C(s)01: Demonstrates understanding of word order in a sentence.

Skill: C(s)13

Skill Statement: Demonstrates ability to recall or retell a story in sequence.

Grade: 1

Comment: This skill is not identified by LAUSD for SES assessment.

PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

Paragraph Development skills focus on the writing of connected discourse. The distinction between paragraph and essay writing is often slight since an essay may consist of only one paragraph, particularly in the lower grades. The skills in this category are especially amenable to assessment by actual writing; thus, several skills are assessed by a writing sample.

PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT (pd)	1	2	3	4	5	6
01. Creates a title for a paragraph.*						
02. Writes simple one- or two-sentence paragraphs containing one main idea.*						
03. Indents the first word of each new paragraph.*						
04. Composes a paragraph describing a sequence of times or events.						x
05. Combines three or more paragraphs to create the beginning, middle, and end of a story.						
06. Uses/identifies transitional words and phrases to make paragraphs and sentences flow smoothly.				x	x	
07. Edits and proofreads paragraphs for final copy.				x	x	
08. Writes paragraphs from an outline.						
09. Writes paragraphs showing conversation.						x

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*Assessed by grade 3 writing sample.

Skill: C(pd)01

Skill Statement: Creates a title for a paragraph.

Comment: This skill is assessed by the writing sample for grade 3. Consequently, no selected-response items are included in the SES.

Skill: C(pd)02

Skill Statement: Writes simple one- or two-sentence paragraphs containing one main idea.

Comment: This skill is assessed by the writing sample for grade 3. Consequently, no selected-response items are included in the SES.

Skill: C(pd)03

Skill Statement: Indents the first word of each new paragraph.

Comment: This skill is assessed by the writing sample for grade 3. Consequently, no selected-response items are included in the SES.

Skill: C(pd)04

Skill Statement: Composes a paragraph describing a sequence of times or events.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student arranges a sequence of events in chronological (time) order. This skill is relevant to the composition of narratives. A narrative presents an experience to an audience, giving the impression of passage in time.

Chronological ordering is also used to organize expository writing (e.g., a report on an event in history, a "how-to-do-it" explanation). However, assessment at this grade level is limited to narrative paragraphs, which should be more familiar to students.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: The sentences in this story are not in the right order. Read the title and the story. Then answer the question that follows the story.

1. THE VISITOR AT THE DOOR

I. As Sharon opened the door, the noise grew louder.

II. Sharon saw a little puppy standing by the door.

III. Sharon heard a noise outside her door.

What is the right order for these sentences?

A. III, I, II
B. I, III, II
C. III, II, I

Directions: This story is not finished. Read the title and the story. Then answer the question that follows the story.

2. THE LANDING

The spacecraft slowly settled on the surface of the planet. A door in the side of the ship slid open. A ladder was lowered to the ground.

C(pd)04 (continued)

Which sentence should come next in the story?

A. A small figure stood in the doorway of the ship and peered out.

B. The spacecraft turned out of its orbit and dived toward the planet.

C. The ship's engines roared as it descended from the clouds.

Item Description

Two separate item types are used to assess this skill. In the first type (item 1), the stimulus is the title of a hypothetical story. The student identifies an appropriate sequence of events for the story by determining which is the beginning, middle, and ending sentence (choice A). The title is broad enough to encompass the events listed for the story and narrow enough to limit the arrangement of those events.

The answer choices are amenable to only one possible sequence. That sequence should be readily evident. Transitional expressions that suggest time order (e.g., then, next) are not used in the sentences because students might choose on the basis of the time word rather than on the event arrangement of the story.

Pronouns are not substituted for nouns in any of the sentences (even though this does make the story stylistically awkward). If pronouns were used, students who recognize the need for pronoun referents could use that knowledge to determine the correct order of the sentences. For example, the sentence "She saw a little puppy standing by the door" could not be the first sentence in the story because the referent for the pronoun she would not have been identified.

In the second item type (item 2), the stimulus is the title and first three sentences of a story. The student selects the sentence (choice A) that describes an event that follows the time sequence of the story. Distractors are sentences that describe events that obviously precede the time frame of the story.

Skill: C(pd)05

Skill Statement: Combines three or more paragraphs to create the beginning, middle, and end of a story.

Comment: This skill is not identified by LAUSD for SES assessment. However, this skill is partially assessed by Skill C(pd)04: Composes a paragraph describing a sequence of times or events.

Skill: C(pd)06

Skill Statement: Uses/identifies transitional words and phrases to make paragraphs and sentences flow smoothly.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student uses words and phrases to signal a relationship between the content of a new sentence and the one before it. The purpose of transitional expressions is to tie separate parts into a unified whole; they indicate that something has gone before and help to tie that something to what follows; they are coherence devices.

At this grade level, the student uses chronological expressions to signal time relationships. Time relationships can be (1) past time (e.g., earlier, yesterday), (2) concurrent time (e.g., in the meantime, while), (3) subsequent time (e.g., next, then, later). Past time and concurrent time require more difficult stimuli and more difficult processing, so items for this skill elicit only expressions for subsequent time.

The following list contains other frequently used chronological transitions for subsequent time:

immediately
afterward
soon
after
after that
second
last
finally
from that time on

Comment: This is an important sub-skill of writing a narrative. However, chronological transitions are also used in expository writing when they are the most logical expressions for the content to be explained.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which is the best word to use in the blank?

1. Isabel walked up to the door of the old house. She held her breath as she stood on the porch. She was scared. ____________ she turned the handle.

A. Then
B. Gladly
C. Earlier
D. While

C(pd)06 (continued)

Item Description

The stimulus is a narrative paragraph that clearly conveys a sequence of events. The setting/situation of the paragraph implies by its tone that the character involved could only have a certain general attitude toward the situation (this criterion is necessary for the adverb distractor explained below). The paragraph is short so that the reading load does not increase the difficulty of the task.

The student selects the word or words that best fit the sentence that has a missing word (identified by a blank). Transitional expressions may appear at other places in a sentence; however, items with initial blanks should be easier for the student. When the blank comes at the beginning of the sentence, all choices are capitalized.

The correct answer (choice A) is a transitional expression for time that is clearly cued by the sentences before the sentence with the blank; it fits in with the sequence of the activities in the paragraph. One distractor type (choice B) is an adverb that does not reflect the probable state of mind of the character involved in the action; this is the easiest distractor type if the specific distractor is carefully selected on the basis of the tone conveyed by the stimulus.

Another distractor type (choice C) is an expression that shows earlier time; this distractor does not fit the time sequence and sometimes transforms the sentence into a sentence fragment. The most difficult distractor type (choice D) is an expression for concurrent time, because the time range is less defined than it is with expressions for earlier time. This type will sometimes transform the sentence into a fragment; also, it does not fit the sequence suggested by the paragraph.

Grade: 5

Skill Description

At this grade level, the student uses words or phrases to signal a logical relationship between the content of a new sentence and the one that precedes it. Logical expressions may include time relators (see Skill Description for grade 4) and space relators (e.g., below, nearby) as well as transitions that indicate other logical relationships such as cause and effect (e.g., because), comparison (e.g., also), and contrast (e.g., on the other hand).

The following list contains examples of transitional expressions that are frequently used to indicate logical relationships in addition to those listed for time expressions and to those noted above:

and
but
yet
for
also
so
nevertheless
still
since
besides
therefore
consequently
as a result
in spite of
accordingly

Comment: This is an important sub-skill of expository and persuasive writing.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which is the best word or words to use in the blank?

1. Football is one kind of game to play. Baseball is another kind of game you can play. Many people __________ like to play basketball.

   A. also
   B. below
   C. soon
   D. yet

2. Riding your bike at night can be dangerous. Drivers may not be able to see you because it is dark. ________ be sure you have a light on your bicycle.

   A. So
   B. Next
   C. Still
   D. On the other hand

Item Description

The stimulus is an expository paragraph that clearly conveys a logical sequence of ideas. The paragraph is short so that the reading load does not increase the difficulty of the task.

The student selects the word or words that best fit the sentence that has a missing word (identified by a blank). Transitional expressions may appear at the beginning or in the middle of a sentence. When the blank comes at the beginning of the sentence, all choices are capitalized (see item 2).

The correct response (choice A) is the transitional expression that is logically cued by the sentences preceding the sentence with a blank. Distractors are transitional expressions that signal other (incorrect) relationships. For example, the space relationship expressed by choice B in item 1 (below) is clearly inappropriate for the given paragraph.

Skill: C(pd)07

Skill Statement: Edits and proofreads paragraphs for final copy.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student reads a composition and finds and/or corrects any errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Proofreading is an extremely important skill in the preparation of final written documents; thus it is taught and assessed at more than one grade level. The student should be able to find and correct errors derived from those skills taught and assessed at earlier grade levels; e.g., at grade 4, students should be able to proofread for capitalization of names of persons (a grade 3 skill), but they should not be required to proofread for capitalization of names of states and countries (a grade 5 skill).

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which sentence is spelled* correctly?

1. A. My friends came to the party.
   B. My friends caim to the party.
   C. My friendes came to the party.

Directions: Which sentence is capitalized* correctly?

2. A. Once I wrote a letter to Julie.
   B. once I wrote a letter to Julie.
   C. Once i wrote a letter to Julie.

Directions: Which sentence is punctuated* correctly?

3. A. Who knows the answer?
   B. Who knows the answer.
   C. Who knows the answer

Item Description

The stimulus is a set of three sentences, presented directly below one another to permit ease of visual comparison. Sentences, rather than paragraphs, are used to minimize the reading task. The student selects the sentence that contains no errors in spelling (item 1), capitalization (item 2), or punctuation (item 3). Distractors are adaptations of the correct response that contain one error derived from skills assessed in grades 1 through 3.

C(pd)07 (continued)

Comment: This item type was suggested and approved by LAUSD despite the following reservations expressed by SWRL:

(1) The items are artifically contrived; i.e., they do not simulate the actual proofreading process. When students proofread their own compositions, they find and correct errors. In these items, however, students select the sentence that does not contain an error. Thus the validity of the assessment task is questionable.

The item type originally suggested by SWRL required the student to find an error in a given sentence and then select the appropriate correction for the error; e.g.:

What is the mistake in the sentence?

All my friendes came to the party.

A. friendes should be friends
B. my should be My
C. came should be caim
D. . should be ?

(2) The LAUSD items are visually confusing; i.e., the student must read three nearly identical sentences to find an error that involves only one or two letters or punctuation marks. Consequently, students may easily overlook the errors.

Grade: 5

Assessment

Comment: Assessment at this grade level parallels that for grade 4, except that spelling and mechanics skills assessed in grades 1-4 are incorporated in the distractors.

Skill: C(pd)08

Skill Statement: Writes paragraphs from an outline.

Comment: This skill is not assessed since it is covered by Skill C(o)04: Uses an outline to prepare a report.

Skill: C(pd)09

Skill Statement: Writes paragraphs showing conversation.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

Comment: The skill statement suggests that a writing sample must be used to assess this skill. However, such an assessment task is not feasible within the current design of the SES. (The sixth grade writing sample for the 1980 SES does not require the production of dialogue.) Therefore, assessment of this skill is limited to the use of dialogue for only one speaker in a paragraph.

When writing a conversation containing dialogue quotations, the student begins a new paragraph for each speaker. The student must be able to recognize dialogue quotations and distinguish between/among the speakers in the conversation. Knowledge of the technical term dialogue is not implicit in this skill.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Read this story part. Where should a new paragraph begin?

1. The bus returned to school in the afternoon. Ⓐ Linda and Ricardo got off the bus and walked toward the classroom. Ⓑ "Did you enjoy the trip to the zoo?" Ricardo asked. Ⓒ Linda replied, "I sure did. Ⓓ My favorite part was the monkey house because some of those monkeys act just like people."

Item Description

The stimulus is a conversation between two speakers. The speakers are identified by name (one male and one female) so that students can clearly distinguish between them. The student identifies the point (choice C) where a new paragraph should begin (i.e., the sentence in which the dialogue shifts from the words of speaker 1 to the words of speaker 2).

Distractors are of three basic types. The first type is a non-dialogue sentence that advances the narration of events (choice A). The second type is a dialogue quotation containing the words of speaker 1 (choice B). The third distractor is a dialogue quotation containing additional words of speaker 2 (choice D).

Comment: Selected-response assessment of this skill places a great deal of emphasis on the student's reading ability. Although such emphasis is not desirable when assessing writing skills, the nature of the skill makes this emphasis unavoidable.

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

The Organizational Skills category contains five skills, of which only three are appropriate for large-scale assessment.

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS (o)	1	2	3	4	5	6
01. Classifies items and/or words.		x		x		
02. Constructs a simple outline in a group situation.						
03. Constructs an outline independently.					x	
04. Uses an outline to prepare a report.						x
05. Writes tables of contents.						

Skill: C(o)01

Skill Statement: Classifies items and/or words.

Grade: 2

Skill Description

The student places common items and common words in appropriate categories. For example, the student classifies an apple, a pie, and a carrot as food. The following are other possible categories: clothing, colors, animals, vehicles, beverages, toys, numbers.

Assessment

Comment: Two item types are used: (a) pictures (i.e, "items") and (b) words.

(a) Sample Item

Directions: Which picture is a toy?

A. [picture: ball]
B. [picture: apple]
C. [picture: hand]

Item Description

The student chooses the picture of the item that belongs to the category named in the directions. Three picture choices are provided. The distractor pictures clearly do not belong to the category and are not interpretable as belonging to the category; for example, a picture of a cake might be interpreted as a toy since children often make "pretend" (play) cakes.

(b) Sample Item

Directions: Which word is a color?

A. green
B. pull
C. here

C(o)01 (continued)

Item Description

The student chooses the word that labels an item or a concept that belongs in the category named in the directions. Three answer choices are provided. The distractor words clearly do not belong to the category and are not interpretable as belonging to the category; for example, the word balloon might be interpreted as a color since balloons have color.

Grade: 4

Comment: Only words are assessed at this grade level since words do not pose the same ambiguities of interpretation as pictures and since students have larger reading vocabularies than in grade 2.

Skill Description

The student places words in appropriate categories. For example, the student classifies branch, trunk, and leaf as parts of trees. The following are other possible categories (in addition to those mentioned for grade 2): body parts, family membership, noises, buildings, movements, furniture, games, money, meals, places, occupations, shapes, seasons, rooms, birds, months, days, insects, vegetables, fruits.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word is a part of the body?

A. finger
B. ring
C. shoe

Item Description

The student chooses the word that labels an item or a concept that belongs in the category named in the directions. Three answer choices are provided. The distractor words at this grade level, while clearly not belonging to the category named, have some conceptual relation to the category or to the correct answer; for example, both rings and shoes go on the body although they are not parts of the body.

Skill: C(o)02

Skill Statement: Constructs a simple outline in a group situation.

Comment: This skill is not identified by LAUSD for SES assessment.

Skill: C(o)03

Skill Statement: Constructs an outline independently.

Grade: 5

Comment: Analysis of textbook instruction suggests that students may not be able to perform this skill until grade 6.

Skill Description

Given a subject, the student constructs an outline. The outline may suggest an essay in any discourse mode or form (except poetry), although outlines are most commonly constructed for expository writing. The purpose of constructing an outline is to organize one's thought/ideas/facts in preparation for writing. (The follow-up skill, C(o)04, is to write a composition from the outline.)

Outline construction consists of two major subskills: organization and format. For organization, related ideas are grouped together; each main topic is followed by its related subtopics. For format, two subskills are included: indentation and numbering/lettering. Each main topic is at the margin, with subtopics indented under it. Main topics are preceded by (capital) Roman numerals; subtopics are preceded by capital letters. (Outlines can be constructed with additional levels, but such detailed organization is not usually taught in elementary school.) The numbers and letters are followed by periods, and each topic begins with a capital letter. For convenience, the latter skill is included here for assessment although it is listed in the Mechanics in Writing section of the LAUSD continuum (Skill C(m)09: Capitalizes each topic in an outline).

Two kinds of outlines are commonly used: topic outlines, for which the idea are expressed in the form of phrases, and sentence outlines, for which the ideas are expressed in the form of sentences. Only topic outlines are used for assessment purposes because they are simpler and require less reading. Topic outlines are generally constructed with parallel syntactic structures for the topics.

Assessment

Comment: Four different item types are used to assess the four different subskills described above.

(a) organization

Sample Item

Directions: The outline has a line missing. What goes on line A?

C(o)03 (continued)

Kinds of Animals

I. Wild Animals
  A. Lions
  B. Bears
II. Tame Animals
  A. ______
  B. Cats

A. Dogs
B. Tigers
C. Tails
D. Houses

Item Description

The student chooses the correct subtopic to complete an outline. The outline consists of a title, two main topics, and two or three subtopics for each main topic. One subtopic under one main topic is missing. The student chooses the appropriate phrase for the missing line. The choices are varied as follows:

A. Correct answer.
B. Phrase relating to the other topic in the outline.
C. & D. Phrase tangentially related to the topic, but not fitting in the outline; e.g., tame animals have tails and are often found in houses, but tails and houses are not appropriate subtopics for the topic "Tame Animals."

(b) indentation

Sample Item

Directions: Which outline is correctly indented?

A.

Colors

Dark Colors
  Brown
  Black
Light Colors
  Pink
  Yellow
  White

B.

Colors

  Dark Colors
Brown
Black
  Light Colors
Pink
Yellow
White

C(o)03 (continued)

C.

Colors

Dark Colors
  Brown
Black
  Light Colors
Pink
  Yellow
White

D.

Colors

Dark Colors
    Brown
        Black
Light Colors
    Pink
        Yellow
            White

Item Description

The student chooses the correctly indented outline. The outline consists of a title, two main topics, and two or three subtopics for each main topic. The correct answer is the correctly indented outline: main topics at the margin, subtopics indented under the main topics and aligned with each other.

The distractors have the same outline content and order, but take the following forms:

B. Reverse indentation of the correct form; i.e., main topics indented and subtopics at margin.

C. Alternation of lines for margin and indentation; i.e., the first, third, fifth, and seventh lines at margin, the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth lines indented.

D. "Step" indentation of lines: main topics at margin; first subtopic indented; second subtopic indented under the first; third subtopic indented under the second.

Comment: Since only indentation is being assessed with this item type, numbering and lettering are not used; they are assessed in the following section. Moreover, since the indentation is wrong in three choices, it is not possible to include numbering and lettering.

C(o)03 (continued)

(c) numbering/lettering

Sample Item

Directions: Which outline is correctly numbered and lettered?

A.

Birds

I. Ones That Live on Water
A. Ducks
B. Geese
II. Ones That Live in Trees
A. Robins
B. Woodpeckers

B.

Birds

I. Ones That Live on Water
II. Ducks
III. Geese
IV. Ones That Live in Trees
V. Robins
VI. Woodpeckers

C.

Birds

A. Ones That Live on Water
B. Ducks
C. Geese
D. Ones That Live in Trees
E. Robins
F. Woodpeckers

D.

Birds

I. Ones That Live on Water
1. Ducks
2. Geese
II. Ones That Live in Trees
1. Robins
2. Woodpeckers

C(o)03 (continued)

Item Description

The student chooses the outline with correct numbering and lettering. The outline consists of a title, two main topics, and two or three subtopics for each main topic. The correct answer is the outline with the correct numbering and lettering: (capital) Roman numerals for the main topics; capital letters for the subtopics.

The distractors have the same outline content, order, and indentation, but take the following forms:

B. All topics and subtopics numbered in order with (capital) Roman numerals.

C. All topics and subtopics lettered in order with capital letters.

D. Topics numbered correctly in order (I and II); subtopics numbered in order with Arabic numerals (1, 2, and 3).

(d) capitalization of each topic in an outline (Skill C(m)09)

Sample Item

Directions: Here is part of an outline. Which word should begin with a capital letter?

A. Holidays

1. Special events
A

2. no school or work
B C D

Item Description

The student chooses the correct word in an outline that should be capitalized. The stimulus is a part of an outline: a subtopic (preceded by a capital letter) and two or three sub-subtopics (preceded by Arabic numerals). This organization is used (1) because it is different from other items that the student could derive ("copy") information from, and (2) because at the topic and subtopic level all words are often capitalized, but at the sub-subtopic level non-initial words are generally not capitalized, thus permitting distractors.

C(a)03 (continued)

The subtopic (e.g., Holidays, above) should be one word to avoid the problem of whether or not to capitalize the non-initial words. If they are capitalized, students may think that non-initial words should be capitalized on the following lines. If they are not capitalized, students may think that there is a mistake. However, the sub-subtopics must be phrases in order to provide for distractors.

Four words beginning with lower-case letters are indicated. The correct answer (B above) is the initial word in one line of the outline. This word should not be one that is commonly used as a proper noun; thus students must know that it should be capitalized purely on the basis of its position in the outline. The other three words are non-initial words in the sub-subtopic lines.

Skill: C(o)04

Skill Statement: Uses an outline to prepare a report.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

Given an outline (see Skill C(o)03), the student constructs a report that follows the outline. The outline may be a sentence or a topic outline; however, only topic outlines are used for assessment because (1) they are simpler and require less reading, and (2) they are less similar to a report, which requires use of complete sentences. The outline should suggest expository writing (the usual discourse type for a report). The report prepared from the outline must include all of the outline content in the order given. The outline topics must be reconstructed as complete sentences and must be connected with appropriate transitional expressions; however, the ability to handle these writing details is not assessed here.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Read the outline and the paragraphs that have been written from it. Which sentence best describes each paragraph?

Musical Instruments

I. Brass Instruments
    A. Trumpets
    B. Bugles
II. String Instruments
    A. Violins
    B. Guitars

1. Musical Instruments

There are many kinds of musical instruments. Some instruments are called brass instruments. Trumpets are brass instruments; so are bugles. Some instruments are called string instruments. Violins are string instruments. Guitars are also string instruments.

A. The paragraph matches the outline exactly.

B. The paragraph does not have all the information from the outline.

C. The paragraph has all the information from the outline, but it is not in the right order.

C(o)04 (continued)

2. **Musical Instruments**

There are many kinds of musical instruments. Some instruments are called brass instruments. Some instruments are called string instruments. Violins are string instruments. Guitars are also string instruments.

A. The paragraph matches the outline exactly.

B. The paragraph does not have all the information from the outline.

C. The paragraph has all the information from the outline, but it is not in the right order.

3. **Musical Instruments**

There are many kinds of musical instruments. Some instruments are called string instruments. Violins are string instruments. Guitars are also string instruments. Some instruments are called brass instruments. Trumpets are brass instruments; so are bugles.

A. The paragraph matches the outline exactly.

B. The paragraph does not have all the information from the outline.

C. The paragraph has all the information from the outline, but it is not in the right order.

4. **Musical Instruments**

There are many kinds of musical instruments. Some instruments are called brass instruments. Some instruments are called string instruments. Trumpets are brass instruments; so are bugles. Violins are string instruments. Guitars are also string instruments.

A. The paragraph matches the outline exactly.

B. The paragraph does not have all the information from the outline.

C. The paragraph has all the information from the outline, but it is not in the right order.

C(o)04 (continued)

Item Description

Given an outline and a paragraph written from it, the student chooses the sentence that describes the relation between the outline and the paragraph.

The stimulus outline consists of a title, two main topics, and two subtopics for each main topic. One correct paragraph (item 1) is written containing all information in the outline in the order given. At least one incorrect paragraph (item 2) is missing a subtopic from the outline, but otherwise is correctly ordered and is worded the same (insofar as possible) as the correct paragraph. At least one incorrect paragraph (items 3 and 4) includes all of the information from the outline and is worded the same (insofar as possible) as the correct paragraph; however, the topics are not in the order of the outline. Incorrect order can be created by reversing the main topics and their related subtopics (as in item 3) or by putting main topics together and following or preceding them with all of the subtopics together (as in item 4).

Each paragraph is followed by three descriptive sentences; i.e., describing the three ways that the outline can be rewritten (correct, incomplete, or incorrectly ordered). The student selects the sentence that describes the paragraph's relation to the outline.

Skill: C(o)05

Skill Statement: Writes tables of contents.

Comment: This skill is not amenable to large-scale assessment. However, use of tables of contents is assessed in the Reading section of the SES (grade 2).

DICTIONARY/REFERENCE SOURCES

The skills in the Dictionary/Reference Sources category overlap considerably with those found in the Reading continuum. Therefore, some skills are assessed only in the Reading section of the SES, and some skills are assessed only in the Composition section. The Composition section of the SES primarily emphasizes those Dictionary/Reference Sources skills that are used for alphabetization.

DICTIONARY/REFERENCE SOURCES (d/r)	1	2	3	4	5	6
01. Identifies letters of the alphabet in sequence.	x					
02. Identifies letters of the alphabet at random.						
03. Uses picture dictionary and primary encyclopedia.	x					
04. Participates in location/study classroom activities, such as in compiling an individual word box, book, or file.						
Alphabetizes letters and words.						
05. . first letter		x				
06. . second letter			x			
07. . third letter and beyond				x		x
08. Relates use of illustrations to dictionary entries.						
09. Identifies sections of dictionary in locating words.				x		
10. Locates words in a dictionary.						
11. Uses guide letters/words to locate an entry.					x	
12. Identifies and uses the various dictionary keys.						
13. Demonstrates use of parts of a dictionary.						
14. Demonstrates use of phonemic respellings of words in dictionary.						
15. Uses and interprets diacritical markings.						x
16. Selects appropriate meaning of a word from multiple definitions.						
17. Identifies and uses stressed and unstressed syllables.						
18. Uses a table of contents.						
19. Uses an index.						
20. Locates, identifies, and uses various reference sources in the library.						x

Skill: C(d/r)01

Skill Statement: Identifies letters of the alphabet in sequence.

Grade: 1

Skill Description

The student knows the A-Z alphabetical sequence and locates contingous letters in order. This skill is prerequisite to Skill C(d/r)05: Alphabetizes letters and words.

Assessment

Sample Items

1. Directions: Which letter comes next after C?

A B C _

A. D
B. F
C. M

2. Directions: Which letter comes right before R?

_ R S T

A. Q
B. D
C. W

3. Directions: Which letter comes next after V?

U V _ X

A. W
B. T
C. Z

C(d/r)01 (continued)

Item Description

The student chooses the letter that can be correctly added to a given sequence of letters, which are in contiguous alphabetical order. The stimulus consists of a series of three letters in alphabetical order and a blank. The blank may be at the end of the sequence (item 1), at the beginning of the sequence (item 2), or in the middle of the sequence (item 3).

The student chooses from among three letters. The correct answer (A above) is the letter that completes the sequence. The distractor letters are letters that are outside of the given sequence; they may come before the sequence (B in items 2 and 3) or after the sequence (C in items 1 through 3).

Skill: C(d/r)02

Skill Statement: Identifies letters of the alphabet at random.

Comment: This skill is not identified by LAUSD for SES assessment.

Skill: C(d/r)03

Skill Statement: Uses picture dictionary and primary encyclopedia.

Grade: 1

Skill Description

The student locates words in a picture dictionary. When using a picture dictionary, the student usually knows the word orally, but does not know the spelling. By locating a picture corresponding to the word, the student can find the spelling that appears with it and can use that spelling in his/her writing.

Most picture dictionaries are arranged by concept, i.e., with separate pages for people, animals, colors, etc. However, LAUSD prefers picture dictionaries that are arranged alphabetically. Therefore, this skill requires the student to locate pictures that are arranged alphabetically.

Comment: The second part of this skill ("Uses . . . primary encyclopedia") is not assessed because encyclopedia use is generally not taught at this grade level and because grade 1 students usually do not have sufficient reading ability to use an encyclopedia.

Assessment

Comment: The basic skill required to use a picture dictionary is the ability to recognize pictures. For example, given the word "horse" orally, the student should be able to identify a picture of a horse. However, such an ability is so basic (probably required at the kindergarten level) that it is not appropriate for assessment on the SES.

Because LAUSD is primarily concerned with the ability to locate words alphabetically, the items used to assess this skill focus on identifying the first letter of words. This assessment of this skill is similar to that used for Skill C(sp)01. However, the present skill differs (1) by using capital letters and (2) by not requiring discrimination of similar letters or similar sounds.

C(d/r)03 (continued)

Sample Item

Directions: Which letter begins the name of the picture?

[picture: fish]

A F Z

Item Description

The student chooses the letter that begins the word illustrated in a given picture. The stimulus for each item is a picture and a series of three letters arranged in alphabetical order. The correct answer (F above) is the letter that begins the word illustrated in the picture. The distractors are letters that come before and/or after the target letter in normal alphabetical sequence. Distractors are neither graphically nor orally confusing with the target letter.

Skill: C(d/r)04

Skill Statement: Participates in location/study classroom activities, such as in [sic] compiling an individual word box, book, or file.

Comment: This skill is not assessed because it is not amenabie to large-scale testing.

Skill: C(d/r)05

Skill Statement: Alphabetizes letters and words: first letter.

Grade: 2

Skill Description

At this grade level, the student is able to (1) put letters in alphabetical order and (2) alphabetize words by the first letter. For subskill (1), the student arranges a sequence of letters in alphabetical order. For subskill (2), the student alphabetizes words by the first letter only, e.g., book before cake.

Assessment

Comment: Three item types are used: type (a) requires the student to identify correctly alphabetized lists of letters; type (b) requires the student to identify correctly alphabetized lists of words; type (c) requires the student to insert a word into an alphabetized list. Type (a) assesses subskill (1); types (b) and (c) assess subskill (2).

(a) Sample Item

Directions: Which box of letters is in alphabetical order?

A.	B.	C.
C	D	C
D	C	E
E	E	D

Item Description

The student chooses the correctly alphabetized list of letters from a set of three lists. Each list contains the same three alphabetically contiguous letters, but differs in the order of the letters. One list (A above) is the correctly alphabetized list of letters. The other two lists have the letters rearranged in non-alphabetical order.

(b) Sample Items

Directions: Which box of words is in alphabetical order?

1.

A.	B.	C.
away	big	away
big	away	come
come	come	big

C(d/r)05 (continued)

2. A.	B.	C.
help play want	play help want	help want play

Item Description

The student chooses the correctly alphabetized list of words from a set of three lists. Each list contains the same three words, each beginning with different letters. The first letters of the words may be alphabetically contiguous (item 1), or not (item 2). One list (A above) is correctly alphabetized. The other two lists have the words rearranged in non-alphabetical order.

(c) Sample Item

Directions: The words are in alphabetical order.
Which word should go on the line?

jump
play
____
work

A. see
B. help
C. you

Item Description

The student chooses the word that can be correctly added to a specified position in an alphabetical list. The stimulus consists of a list of three words in alphabetical order, each word beginning with a different letter. The list also includes a blank in the middle of the list.

The student chooses from among three answer choices, all of which begin with different letters. The correct answer (A above) is the word that fits alphabetically in the blank. The distractors are words that fit elsewhere in the list. They may come before the first word (B), after the last word (C), or between adjacent pairs of words (e.g., make). However, they must not be able to fit in the position of the blank; e.g., toy cannot be used for the sample item.

Skill: C(d/r)06

Skill Statement: Alphabetizes words: second letter.

Grade: 3

Skill Description

The student alphabetizes words by the second letter. At this grade level, the words have the same first letter, so they must be alphabetized by the second letter, e.g., cage before cent.

Assessment

Comment: Two item types are used: type (a) requires the student to identify correctly alphabetized lists of words; type (b) requires the student to insert a word into an alphabetized list.

(a) Sample Item

Directions: Which set of words is in alphabetical* order*?

A.	B.	C.
cap	cap	cap
clock	corn	clock
corn	clock	cream
cream	cream	corn

Item Description

The student chooses the correctly alphabetized list of words from a set of three lists. Each list contains the same four words, and they all begin with the same letter, but differ in the second letter. One list (A above) is correctly alphabetized. The other two lists have the words rearranged in non-alphabetical order.

(b) Sample Items

Directions: These words are in alphabetical* order.* Which word should go on the line?

1.	______	A. farm
	fence	B. fight
	floor	C. food
	fun	

2.	second	A. stone
	shiny	B. safe
	song	C. skate
	______	

C(d/r)06 (continued)

3. pair
______
picture
popcorn

A. peanut
B. print
C. pull

Item Description

The student chooses the word that can be correctly added to a specified position in an alphabetical list. The stimulus consists of a list of three words in alphabetical order; the words begin with the same letter, but differ in the second letter. The list also includes a blank, which may be at the beginning of the list (item 1), at the end of the list (item 2) or in the middle of the list (item 3).

The student chooses from among three answer choices, all of which begin with the same letter as in the stimulus list, but differ in the second letter. The correct answer (A above) is the word that fits alphabetically in the blank. The distractors are words that fit elsewhere in the list. They may come before the first word (B in item 2), after the last word (B and C in item 3), or between adjacent pairs of words (B and C in item 1, C in item 2). However, they must not be able to fit in the position of the blank; e.g., such cannot be used for item 2.

Skill: C(d/r)07

Skill Statement: Alphabetizes words: third letter and beyond.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student alphabetizes words by the third letter. At this grade level, the words have the same first and second letters, so they must be alphabetized by the third letter, e.g., cabin before carpet.

Assessment

Comment: Two item types are used: type (a) requires the student to identify correctly alphabetized lists of words; type (b) requires the student to insert a word into an alphabetized list.

(a) Sample Item

Directions: Which list of words is in alphabetical* order?

A.	B.	C.
cabin	cabin	cabin
cannon	carpet	cannon
carpet	cannon	cave
cave	cave	carpet

Item Description

The student chooses the correctly alphabetized list of words from a set of three lists. Each list contains the same four words, and they all begin with the same two letters, but differ in the third letter. One list (A above) is correctly alphabetized. The other two lists have the words rearranged in non-alphabetical order.

(b) Sample Items

Directions: These words are in alphabetical order. Which word should go on the line?

1.

______
step
stood
street

A. star
B. study
C. stick

2.

tag
talk
tank
______

A. taste
B. table
C. tail

C(d/r)07 (continued)

3. package
palace
______
paste

A. parent
B. patch
C. paid

Item Description

The student chooses the word that can be correctly added to a specified position in an alphabetical list. The stimulus consists of a list of three words in alphabetical order; the words begin with the same two letters, but differ in the third letter. The list also includes a blank space, which may be at the beginning of the list (item 1), at the end of the list (item 2), or in the middle of the list (item 3).

The student chooses from among three answer choices, all of which begin with the same two letters as in the stimulus list, but differ in the third letter. The correct answer (*A* above) is the word that fits alphabetically in the blank. The distractors are words that fit elsewhere in the list. They may belong before the first word (*B* in item 1), after the last word (*B* in items 1 and 3), or between adjacent pairs of words (*C*). However, they must not be able to fit in the position of the blank; e.g., *taught* cannot be used for item 2.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student alphabetizes words by the fourth letter and the fifth letter. At this grade level, the words have the same first, second, and third letters, but must be alphabetized by the fourth and fifth letters (e.g., *parent* before *parrot* and *sheep* before *sheet*).

Assessment

Comment: Item types are the same as in grade 4, except that the words in each set begin with the same three or four letters.

Skill: C(d/r)08

Skill Statement: Relates use of illustrations to dictionary entries.

Comment: This skill is not identified by LAUSD for SES assessment.

Skill: C(d/r)09

Skill Statement: Identifies sections of dictionary in locating words.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student identifies sections of a dictionary in order to locate words. The following sections of a dictionary are assessed by this skill: front (A to E), middle (F to P), and back (Q to Z). For example, if the student wishes to find a word beginning with M, she/he looks in the middle of a dictionary, not at the front or the back. Use of this skill helps speed up the student's locating of words.

Assessment

Sample Item

In a dictionary*, where would you find the word window?

A. in the front
B. in the middle
C. in the back

Item Description

The student chooses the correct section of a dictionary where a particular word can be found. The directions for each item ask the student to pick the section of the dictionary containing a specific word. For each item, three answers are offered: (A) the front, (B) the middle, or (C) the back.

The words used to assess this skill must be clearly in one section and not near the borders; e.g., K or M words should be used for the middle section, not F, G, O, or P words.

Skill: C(d/r)10

Skill Statement: Locates words in a dictionary.

Comment: This skill is not identified by LAUSD for SES assessment.

Skill: C(d/r)11

Skill Statement: Uses guide letters/words to locate an entry.

Grade: 5

Skill Description

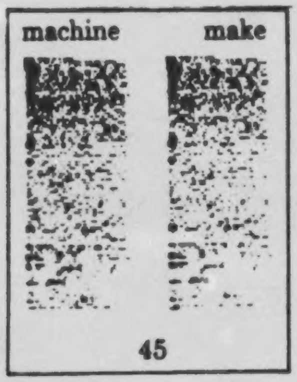
The student uses guide words to locate a word in a dictionary or glossary. Guide words appear at the top right and left hand side of each page and signify the first and last word listed on each page. By using the guide words and by following alphabetical order, the student can locate a specific word.

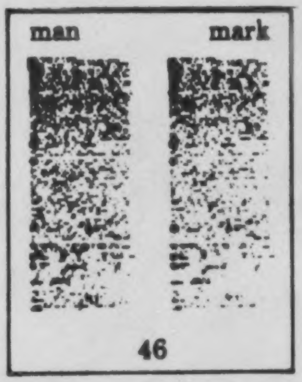
Comment: Guide letters indicate the letter or letters that begin the first and last word on each page. However, because their use is relatively infrequent, they are not assessed here.

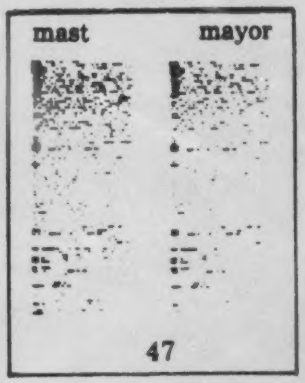
Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: These are dictionary pages. Look at the two guide words at the top of each page. Answer the questions below.







Where would you find the word magic?

A. on page 45
B. on page 46
C. on page 47

C(d/r)11 (continued)

Item Description

The student reads the guide words on dictionary (or glossary) pages and indicates the page number where the specific word can be found.

The stimulus is a set of three mock dictionary pages in consecutive order. Each page has guide words at the top right and left hand corners and the page number in the center at the bottom. The rest of the page is unreadable. The student identifies the page where a specific word would appear. The three page numbers, in order, are the answer choices. The guide words and the words to be located begin with the same first two letters (cf. Skill C(d/r)07, grade 4).

Skill: C(d/r)12

Skill Statement: Identifies and uses the various dictionary keys.

Comment: This skill is not assessed because it is partially covered by the Reading section of the SES (grade 3) and by Skill C(d/r)15: Uses and interprets diacritical markings.

Skill: C(d/r)13

Skill Statement: Demonstrates use of parts of a dictionary.

Comment: This skill is not assessed for Composition because it is covered by the Reading section of the SES (grade 3).

Skill: C(d/r)14

Skill Statement: Demonstrates use of phonemic respellings of words in dictionary.

Comment: For economy of assessment, this skill is assessed together with Skill C(d/r)15: Uses and interprets diacritical markings.

Skill: C(d/r)15

Skill Statement: Uses and interprets diacritical markings.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student uses the diacritical markings found in a dictionary or glossary to determine the pronunciation of a word. At this grade level, the student is able to read a pronunciation key to demonstrate use of phonemic respellings of words (cf. Skill C(d/r)14). Symbols used in this skill include the macron (line over vowels to mark the long sound), schwa (/ə/--cf. Skill C(sp)17), and the accent (stress) mark (cf. Skill C(d/r)17).

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which word is the one in pronunciation symbols?

1. /pə rād'/
   - A. parade
   - B. parrot
   - C. parent
   - D. pardon

2. /bāt/
   - A. bait
   - B. bad
   - C. bath
   - D. bet

PRONUNCIATION KEY

/ā/ as in date

/ə/ as in ago

C(d/r)15 (continued)

Item Description

The student chooses the word that is shown in pronunciation symbols. Each item contains one word transcribed in pronunciation symbols and four possible answer choices. The correct answer (A above) is the one for which the pronunciation is shown.

The correct answer and its distractors are similar in spelling and have the same number of syllables. This ensures that the student is making the correct choice based on knowledge of pronunciation symbols (and not just matching the target word with the answer most similar in appearance). Therefore, the student must consciously interpret the diacritical markings and consult the pronunciation key for more complicated symbols.

For example, in item 1, all four answer choices begin with the same three letters, but differ in the fourth letter and beyond. In item 2, three of the four choices begin with the same two letters (ba); the fourth choice (bet) begins and ends with the same letters as the target word.

A pronunciation key is included to help interpret the pronunciation symbols. The key contains the interpretation of all vowel symbols used; it does not contain consonant symbols, since they are usually the same as the most common spelling. By using this key, the student should be able to determine the correct answer.

Skill: C(d/r)16

Skill Statement: Selects appropriate meaning of a word from multiple definitions.

Comment: This skill is not assessed for Composition because it is covered by the Reading section of the SES (grade 3).

Skill: C(d/r)17

Skill Statement: Identifies and uses stressed and unstressed syllables.

Comment: For economy of assessment, this skill is assessed together with Skill C(d/r)15: Uses and interprets diacritical markings.

Skill: C(d/r)18

Skill Statement: Uses a table of contents.

Comment: This skill is not identified by LAUSD for SES assessment. However, it is covered by the Reading section of the SES (grade 2).

Skill: C(d/r)19

Skill Statement: Uses an index.

Comment: This skill is not identified by LAUSD for SES assessment. However, it is covered by the Reading section of the SES (grade 5).

Skill: C(d/r)20

Skill Statement: Locates, identifies, and uses various reference sources in the library.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student locates, identifies, and uses various reference sources in the library to find information about specific items or topics. The reference sources used to assess this skill are the following: atlas, card catalog, dictionary, and encyclopedia.

Assessment

Sample Items

1. Directions: Which would you use to find the most information about flags?

   A. an encyclopedia
   B. a dictionary
   C. an atlas*

2. Directions: Where would you look to find a book about dogs?

   A. in the card catalog*
   B. in an atlas*
   C. in a dictionary

Item Description

The student chooses the correct reference source to find specific information about a given topic. In each item, a specific topic is indicated and three possible answer choices are offered. The choices include a dictionary, encyclopedia, atlas, and card catelog. Only one answer choice (A above) can be correct for each item, so distractors should not list potentially correct answer choices.

SPELLING

The Spelling category contains more skills than any other category in the LAUSD Composition continuum, and nearly all the skills are assessed in the SES.

Many of the Spelling skill statements include the word "Identifies"; however, identification is not assessed separately. Moreover, for ease of assessment, "writes" and "spells" have not been interpreted literally, since such an interpretation would require a constructed-response task, which was not permitted by LAUSD test specifications. Instead, all items require the student to choose the correct spelling. In most cases, the items focus on the spelling of the individual parts specified by the skill statement rather than on the spelling of whole words.

In general, items for grades 1-3 use picture cues, while those for grades 4-6 use sentence cues. The pictures must be unambiguously recognizable and represent words in children's oral vocabularies. In addition, items for grades 1-3 usually have three answer choices, whereas those for grades 4-6 have four answer choices. However, items assessing suffixation skills most commonly have three answer choices because four choices would be visually confusing.

SPELLING (sp)	1	2	3	4	5	6
01. Identifies and/or writes words that begin with the same sound.	x					
02. Identifies and spells rhyming words.	x	x				
03. Identifies and writes letters that represent final consonant sounds.	x	x			x	
04. Identifies and spells words that contain short vowel sounds in medial position in CVC pattern.	x					
05. Identifies and spells words containing initial/final consonant clusters.		x				
06. Identifies and spells words containing consonant digraphs (e.g., ch, sh, wh, th).			x			
07. Identifies and spells words containing vowel digraphs.			x		x	
08. Forms plurals by adding s and es.			x			
09. Spells and writes new words by adding endings s, ed, ing to base words.			x			
10. Identifies and spells compound words.					x	
11. Identifies and spells words that contain long vowel/final e pattern.		x				
12. Identifies and spells words containing diphthongs (au, aw, oi, oy, ou, ow).				x		
13. Identifies/uses syllabication in spelling words.						
Identifies and spells words, using derivations.						
14. . prefixes				x		
15. . suffixes						
16. Writes contractions from paired words and writes paired words from contractions.						

SPELLING (continued)	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Identifies the schwa /ə/ sound in words and uses the letters it represents in spelling.						
18. Identifies and spells correctly r-controlled vowel sounds.						x
19. Identifies and spells plurals of words by changing f to v and adding es.						x
20. Identifies and spells plurals or other inflected word forms by changing y to i and adding es.						x
21. Drops final e prior to adding ing suffix.						x
22. Identifies and spells words by changing words to adjectives by adding -able and/or -ful.						x
23. Identifies and spells words by changing root words through adding noun-forming endings (e.g., -er, -ness, -tion).						
24. Identifies and spells words by changing root words through adding the adverb-forming ending ly.						x
25. Forms irregular plurals by changing the root words (e.g., man, men).						x
26. Changes the spelling and/or sound of a root word when adding certain suffixes (e.g., musician, instruction).						x
27. Doubles the final consonant before adding ed or ing when the word ends in a single consonant preceded by a short vowel sound.				x		

Skill: C(sp)01

Skill Statement: Identifies and/or writes words that begin with the same sound.

Grade: 1

Skill Description

The student hears the initial consonant sound in a word and generates the corresponding spelling. In the case of the /k/-k or c spelling, the student also applies the rule that discriminates between the spellings; i.e., /k/ is spelled with k before e, i, and y, but with c before a, o, and u.

The initial consonant sounds assessed are those commonly taught in first grade and are spelled with single letters.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which letter begins the word?

[rug]

___ug

A. r
B. w
C. l

Item Description

The stimulus is a picture reflecting a one-syllable word that follows the CVC spelling pattern. The stimulus also contains the partially spelled word reflected by the picture. A blank is placed where the initial consonant belongs. The student is given three choices from which to select the correct initial consonant.

The distractors for this item are those consonants which are most often confused, in speech and/or writing, with the target consonant. They are listed below.

b - d, m, p, v
d - b, n, t
f - v, p
g - j, k/c, d
h - n, p, k
j - g, d
k - c, g, t
c - k, g, t
l - r, w, t, i
m - b, n
n - d, m, t
p - h, b, q
r - l, w
s - c, z
t - d, n, k
v - f, b
w - r, l
y - v, l
z - s, x

Skill: C(sp)02

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells rhyming words.

Grade: 1

Skill Description

The student hears the rhyming element (medial vowel and final consonant) in a one-syllable CVC word and then identifies other words that rhyme with the stimulus word. The ability to produce rhymes (e.g., examiner says, "Tell me a word that rhymes with red") is generally easier for students and should be considered a prerequisite skill. The concept of rhyme is, of course, also a prerequisite to identifying words that rhyme.

This is an auditory discrimination skill that provides the basis for the subsequent acquisition of many other skills in spelling.

This skill is related to Skill C(sp)03: Identifies and writes letters that represent final consonant sounds, and Skill C(sp) 04: Identifies and spells words that contain short vowel sounds in medial position in CVC words.

Comment: The spelling of rhyming words is not directly assessed; it is indirectly assessed by the skills for spelling vowels and final consonants.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word rhymes with the name of the picture?

[sun]

A. run
B. can

Item Description

The stimulus is a picture reflecting a one-syllable word that follows the CVC sound pattern. The student selects the word that rhymes with the pictured word.

The correct response (choice A) has the same medial vowel and the same final consonant as the stimulus item. The

C(sp)02 (continued)

distractor item (choice B) has either the same final consonant or the same medial vowel as the stimulus item. Since the identification of rhymes requires the recognition of both the medial vowel and the final consonant, the ideal assessment would include two distractors: one with the same vowel and a different consonant, the other with a different vowel and the same consonant. However, because of the limited number of CVC words available for use as distractors at this grade level, this is not possible.

Grade: 2

Skill Description

The student hears the rhyming element in a one-syllable CVCe or CVCC word and is then able to identify other words that rhyme with the stimulus word.

This skill is related to Skill C(sp)03: Identifies and writes letters that represent final consonant sounds, Skill C(sp)05: Identifies and spells words containing initial/final consonant clusters, and Skill C(sp)11: Identifies and spells words that contain long vowel/final e pattern.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which word rhymes with the name of the picture?

1. [nine]

A. fine
B. fire
C. fun

2. [tent]

A. went
B. when
C. want

C(sp)02 (continued)

Item Description

The stimulus is a picture reflecting a one-syllable word that follows the CVCe (item 1) or CVCC (item 2) spelling pattern. The student selects the printed word that rhymes with the name of the pictured stimulus.

The correct response (A above) has the same medial vowel sound and the same final consonant(s) as the stimulus item. One distractor (choice B) has the same vowel sound as the stimulus, but differs in the final consonant. For items assessing CVCC words, the final consonant for this distractor should be (whenever possible) the first consonant in the consonant cluster that distinguishes the stimulus item (e.g., when as a distractor for tent). The other distractor (choice C) has the same final consonant or consonant cluster as the stimulus item, but has a different vowel.

Skill: C(sp)03

Skill Statement: Identifies and writes letters that represent final consonant sounds.

Grade: 1

Skill Description

The student hears the final consonant sound in a word and generates the correct spelling for the following correspondences: /b/-b, /d/-d, /g/-g, /m/-m, /n/-n, /p/-p, /t/-t.

The final consonant sounds to be assessed are those commonly taught in first grade. Those spelled with double letters, consonant clusters, and final r are assessed at higher grade levels.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which letter finishes the word?

[top]

to___

A. p
B. b
C. t

Item Description

The stimulus is a picture reflecting a one-syllable word that follows the CVC spelling pattern. The stimulus also contains the partially spelled word reflected by the picture. A blank is placed where the final consonant belongs. The student is given three choices from which to select the correct final consonant.

The distractors for this item are two consonants that are frequently confused, in speech and/or writing, with the target consonant. They are listed below.

b - d, g, p
d - b, g, t
g - b, d, j, k/c, t
m - n, b
n - m, u, w, d
p - b, h, k, q, t
t - d, k, p

C(sp)03 (continued)

Grade: 2

Skill Description

The student hears the final consonant sound in a word and generates the correct spelling for the following correspondences: /ks/-x, /f/-ff, /k/-ck, /l/-ll, /s/-ss. The student also applies the following specific rules: /ks/ is spelled with x at the end of a root word; /k/, /f/, /l/, and /s/ are spelled with ck, ff, ll, and ss, respectively, at the ends of words after short vowels.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which letter or letters complete the word?

[box]

A. x
B. ks
C. cks

Item Description

The stimulus is a picture reflecting a one-syllable word that ends with one of the assessed consonant spellings. The stimulus also contains the partially spelled word reflected by the picture. A blank is placed where the final consonant belongs. The student selects the correct answer from three choices.

The two distractors represent the most frequent misspellings for the target item. They are listed below.

x - ks, cks, cs, s
ff - f, ft
ck - k, kc, c
ll - l, ld
ss - s, st, z

C(sp)03 (continued)

Grade: 5

Skill Description

The student hears the final consonant sound in a word and generates the correct spelling for the following correspondences: /f/-ph, /j/-ge, /j/-dge, /m/-mb, /s/-ce, and /z/-se. The student also applies the following specific rules: final /j/ is spelled with ge after long vowels and consonants (e.g., page, bulge), and with dge after short vowels (e.g., badge, wedge); /s/ is commonly spelled with ce after long vowels (e.g., race), two-letter vowels (e.g., choice), and consonants (e.g., since); /z/ is commonly spelled with se after two-letter vowels (e.g., bruise).

Final /m/ spelled mb occurs infrequently and is not governed by rules of correspondence. Final /f/ spelled ph also occurs infrequently and cannot be predicted by its environment. In both cases, students must memorize their use in words.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which letter or letters complete the word?

The sailors spotted a hu___ whale near the ship.

A. ge
B. dge
C. dje
D. je

Item Description

The stimulus is a simple sentence containing a word with the target spelling. A blank is placed where the assessed spelling belongs. The student selects the correct answer from four spellings.

Answer choices, in addition to the correct answer (choice A), include alternate spellings for the target sound and single letters that represent graphic confusions. Spellings are listed below with their best distractors.

ph - ff, f, p
ge - dge, j, je, g, dje
dge - ge, j, je, g
mb - m, me, mm, b
ce - se, ss, c, s
se - ze, s, z

Skill: C(sp)04

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells words that contain short vowel sounds in medial position in CVC pattern.

Grade: 1

Skill Description

The student hears the medial short-vowel sound in a word and generates the corresponding spelling. The one-letter vowels assessed are /a/-a, /e/-e, /i/-i, /o/-o, and /u/-u.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which letter goes in the middle of the word?

⌊bus⌋

b___s

A. u
B. o
C. a

Item Description

The stimulus is a picture reflecting a one-syllable word that follows the CVC spelling pattern. The stimulus also contains the partially spelled word reflected by the picture. A blank is placed where the vowel belongs. The student is given three choices from which to select the correct medial vowel.

Since the sound /r/ often controls the sound of a preceding vowel, words ending in r are not used as target words. Attention must also be given to the construction of items assessing /e/ and /i/. In some dialects, the pronunciation of /e/ and /i/ is indistinguishable. This is particularly true when the vowel is followed by the nasal consonants /n/ and /m/; e.g., pen and pin are pronounced the same in some dialects.

The distractors are those spellings that are most commonly confused with the target spelling. They are listed below.

a - e, o, u
e - a, i
i - e, o
o - a, u
u - a, o

Skill: C(sp)05

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells words containing initial/final consonant clusters.

Grade: 2

Skill Description

The student hears the consonant cluster at the beginning or the end of a one-syllable word and generates the corresponding letters. The student also applies the following specific rules: /k/ is spelled with k before e, i, and y, but is spelled with c before a, o, and u and before a consonant; /k/ is spelled with k after another consonant at the end of a word (e.g., ask, milk). With the exception of /k/, each sound in a cluster is spelled as it would be alone.

Only two-letter consonant clusters are included in this assessment. Clusters with three letters are generally introduced in the third grade.

Final consonant clusters are a common source of spelling errors and are generally more difficult for students than initial clusters. The pronunciation, and consequently the spelling, of final consonant clusters is heavily influenced by dialect differences. Common errors (in both pronunciation and spelling) include the omission of the first consonant in the clusters beginning with l and m, and the omission of the final consonant in the others.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which letter or letters begin the word?

[spoon]

___oon

A. sp
B. st
C. p

Directions: Which letter or letters complete the word?

[hand]

ha___

A. nd
B. n
C. d

C(sp)05 (continued)

Item Description

The stimulus is a picture reflecting a one-syllable word that begins (item 1) or ends (item 2) with a consonant cluster. The stimulus also includes the partially spelled word reflected by the picture. A blank is placed where the consonant cluster belongs. The student selects the correct spelling from three choices.

Words used to elicit spellings are one-syllable words with either a long or a short medial vowel. Irregular words, words containing unique correspondences (e.g., *talk*, *could*) and words containing vowel-*r* spellings are not used.

The two distractors for this skill represent common spelling errors due to sound confusions, letter omissions, or letter reversals.

The initial consonant clusters that may be assessed are listed below with their best distractors.

bl - b, dl, pl
br - b, dr, pr
cl - c, k, kl
cr - c, k, kr
dr - br, d, tr
fl - f, fr
fr - f, fl
gl - cl, g, gr
gr - cr, g, gl
pl - bl, p, pr
pr - p, pl
sc - c, s, sk
sk - s, sc
sm - s, sn
sn - s, sm
sp - s, st, p
st - s, sp, t, ts
sw - s, w
tr - t, dr, tw
tw - t, tr

The final consonant clusters that may be assessed are listed below with their best distractors.

ct - ck, ckt, k
ft - f, ff, fd, t
ld - l, ll, le, d, de
lk - ck, ke, lck
lp - p, llp, pe
lt - l, ld, ll, t
mp - m, p, mpe, np
nd - n, nde, d
nt - n, nd, t
sk - s, ss, st, k, ks
st - s, ss, t, ts

Skill: C(sp)06

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells words containing consonant digraphs (e.g., ch, sh, wh, th).

Grade: 3

Skill Description

The student hears the consonant sound at either the beginning or the end of a word and generates the corresponding digraph. The following consonant digraphs are assessed at this level: /ch/-ch, /ng/-ng, /sh/-sh, /th/, /th/-th, /hw/-wh.

The student understands that each of the above sounds is spelled with a specific two-letter consonant, and that the /th/ sound, as in thin, and the /th/ sound, as in then, are both spelled with th. The student also applies the rule that /ch/ is spelled with ch at the end of a word after a long-vowel sound or after another consonant. (The /ch/ shound spelled with tch is not assessed at this level, although tch is the general spelling for /ch/ after a short vowel.)

The fact that a digraph consists of two letters that spell only one sound is a source of difficulty for some students. It is relatively common for students to omit one of the letters in attempting to spell a digraph. Additionally, the /hw/ sound (e.g., why, which) is not differentiated from /w/ in many dialects. Students who do not differentiate between the two sounds must memorize words with the wh spelling.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which letter or letters finish the word?

[sheep]

___eep

A. sh
B. ch
C. s

Item Description

The stimulus is a picture reflecting a one-syllable word that either begins or ends with a consonant digraph. The stimulus also includes the partially spelled word reflected by the

C(sp)06 (continued)

picture. A blank is placed where the consonant digraph belongs. The student is given three choices from which to select the correct digraph.

Words used to elicit spellings are one-syllable words with either a long or a short vowel sound.

The distractors for this skill reflect sound confusions, letter omissions, and letter reversals. Appropriate distractors are listed below.

ch (initial) - sh, c, j, hc
ch (final) - sh, g, hc
ng (final) - g, n, gn
sh (initial) - ch, s, h, ss, hs
sh (final) - ch, s, ss, hs
th (initial) - d, t, ht
th (final) - f, ff, t, ht
wh (initial) - w, hw

Skill: C(sp)07

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells words containing vowel digraphs.

Grade: 3

Skill Description

The student hears the vowel sound in a one-syllable word and generates the corresponding vowel digraph. The student understands that a long-vowel sound is usually spelled with more than one letter, but since each of the sounds assessed by this skill may be spelled in different ways, the student must recall the proper spelling for a specific word.

The vowel digraphs assessed at this level are /ā/-ai, /ā/-ay, /ē/-ea, /ē/-ee, /ō/-oa, /ō/-ow, /ū/-oo, /ū/-ue, /u̇/-oo.

With the exception of the final spellings ay, ow, and ue, the above vowel digraphs usually occur medially. The digraphs ee and /ū/-oo occur medially and finally. The oo spelling of /u̇/ usually occurs only before k and d (foot is an exception).

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which letter or letters complete the word?

[train]

tr___n

A. ai
B. ay
C. a

Item Description

The stimulus is a picture reflecting a one-syllable word that contains a vowel digraph. The stimulus also contains the partially spelled word reflected by the picture. A blank is placed where the vowel digraph belongs. The student is given three choices from which to select the correctly spelled digraph.

Homophones (e.g., tail, road) and vowel-r words are not used. Students at this level have had little practice in distinguishing the spellings of homophones. The /r/ sound often changes the sound of the preceding vowel and, in some dialects, is omitted in speech.

C(sp)07 (continued)

In addition to the correct answer (choice A above), choices include other vowel digraphs for the same sound and the single vowel letter commonly associated with the sound.

The vowel digraphs are listed below with their best distractors.

ai - ay, a
ay - ae, a, ai
ea - ee, e
ee - ea, e
oa - oe, ow, o
ow - oe, o, oa
oo (/ū/) - ue, u
ue - oo, ew, u
oo (/u̇/) - u, o

Grade: 5

Skill Description

At this level, the student generates the following vowel digraph spellings: /e/-ea, /ē/-ie, /ī/-ie, /u/-ou, and /ū/-ew.

The student also applies the following specific rules: /e/ spelled ea usually occurs before d or th (e.g., bread, breath); /ē/ spelled ie occurs most often before f and v; /ī/ spelled ie occurs finally and is found in only four words, die, lie, pie, and tie; /ū/ spelled ew occurs finally and often indicates past tense (e.g., grew, drew). The /u/ sound spelled ou is an infrequent medial digraph derived from the French (e.g., touch, young) and is not predictable; students must memorize those words in which the ou spelling occurs.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which letter or letters complete the word?

Mules can carry a very h____vy load.

A. ea
B. e
C. ie
D. i

C(sp)07 (continued)

Item Description

The stimulus is a simple sentence containing a word with the target digraph. A blank is placed where the assessed digraph belongs. The student selects the correct answer from four spellings.

In addition to the correct answer, choices include the vowel digraph or vowel letter that is the most common spelling for the sound, and two other vowels or vowel digraphs that represent either sound or spelling confusions.

Spellings are listed below with their best distractors.

ea (/e/) - e, i, ie
ie (/ē/) - ee, ea, e
ie (/ī/) - igh, i, y, ye
ou (/u/) - u, o, oo
ew (/ū/) - oo, ue, u

Skill: C(sp)08

Skill Statement: Forms plurals by adding s and es.

Grade: 3

Skill Description

The student recognizes that the plural of a noun is usually formed by adding -s or -es to the root word. The student understands that, while -s forms the plural of most nouns, -es occurs after words that end with the letters s, z, sh, ch, and x.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which letter or letters finish the word?

1. [books]

book___

A. s
B. es
C. ses

2. [dishes]

dish___

A. es
B. s
C. is

Item Description

The stimulus is a picture of more than one of a common item. The stimulus also contains the printed root word reflected by the picture. A blank is placed where the plural suffix belongs. The student selects the correct plural suffix from three choices.

In addition to the correct answer (choice A), answer choices include the other noun plural (choice B), and a spelling that reflects a phonemic confusion (choice C).

Skill: C(sp)09

Skill Statement: Spells and writes new words by adding ending s, ed, ing to base words.

Grade: 3

Skill Description

The student recognizes that verbs must be expanded to fit certain grammatical needs by adding suffixes. Given a verb, the student is able to generate the appropriate letters in a suffix to spell a form of the verb that is grammatically correct in its context.

While this and certain other spelling skills overlap with language skills, formal knowledge of grammatical terms and concepts is not a prerequisite to this skill. It is assumed, however, that the student is familiar with the process of suffixation in oral language and is able to generate the verb forms required to produce a grammatical sentence. However, students who speak a dialect other than standard English may have difficulty with this skill.

Changes in the spelling of root words by doubling the final consonant, dropping the final e, etc., are not required to perform the addition of suffixes at this level.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which letter or letters finish the word?

1. I hope Judy find___ her skates.

   A. s
   B. es
   C. ed

2. Last Saturday, it rain___ all day.

   A. ed
   B. d
   C. ing

3. We were watch___ television.

   A. ing
   B. en
   C. ed

C(sp)09 (continued)

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence containing a verb that needs to be suffixed. A blank is placed where the suffix belongs. The student is given three choices from which to select the correctly spelled suffix.

The verbs selected to elicit spellings are one-syllable words that do not require spelling changes for the addition of these suffixes. The sentences employ the target words in such a manner that the student will not be tempted to substitute a different suffix; e.g., in "John work___ all day," either -s or -ed is appropriate as a suffix.

In addition to the correct answer (A), choices include a distractor that reflects a phonemic or graphic confusion (B) and a distractor that reflects a grammatical error (C).

Skill: C(sp)10

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells compound words.

Grade: 5

Skill Description

The student recognizes that certain English words are the result of putting two words together to create a new word. The student generates the correct spelling of compound words by applying the rules that there is no change in spelling of either word and there is no space between the component words.

The following is a list of some compound words that are frequently taught at this and/or lower levels.

afternoon
airplane
airport
anybody
anyone
anything
anyway
anywhere
baseball
basketball
bedroom
birthday
downstairs
everybody
everyone
everything
everywhere
fireplace
football
grandfather
grandmother
inside
moonlight
outdoors
outside
popcorn
railroad
sidewalk
somebody
somehow
someone
something
sometime
somewhere
sunshine
upstairs

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word completes the compound* word?

__________walk

A. side
B. long
C. fast
D. foot

Item Description

The stimulus is one of the component words of a compound word with an adjoining blank where the assessed spelling belongs. The student selects one of four words to complete the compound.

Depending upon which segment of the compound provides the stimulus, the distractors are either adjectives or nouns that commonly accompany the stimulus component in common usage.

The above format presumes knowledge of the term "compound word."

Skill: C(sp)11

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells words that contain the long vowel/final e pattern.

Grade: 2

Skill Description

The student hears the vowel sound in a one-syllable word and generates the corresponding spelling with the vowel-consonant-e pattern.

The spellings to be assessed at this level include /ā/-a...e, /ī/-i...e, and /ō/-o...e. Two other vowel/final e spellings, /ē/-e...e and /ū/-u...e, are generally introduced at later grade levels.

The student applies the rule that /ī/ before a final consonant is usually spelled i...e. In the cases of a...e and o...e, the student must recall the proper spelling for a specific word. The vowel digraphs ai and oa are also common spellings for these sounds.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which letter or letters complete the word?

[bone]

b_____

A. one
B. oan
C. on

Item Description

The stimulus is a picture reflecting a one-syllable word that is spelled with the long-vowel/final-e spelling pattern. The stimulus also contains the partially spelled word reflected by the picture. A blank is placed after the initial consonant or consonant cluster. The student is given three choices from which to select the correct spelling.

C(sp)11 (continued)

Homophones (e.g., tale, rode) and vowel-r words are not used. Students at this level have had little practice in distinguishing the spellings of homophones. The /r/ sound often changes the sound of the preceding vowel and, in some dialects, is omitted in speech.

In addition to the correct answer, choices include a vowel digraph with the same sound as the correct spelling and the correct vowel without the e ending.

Spellings are listed below with digraphs and vowels that can be combined with final consonants as distractors (e.g., cayk as a distractor for cake).

a...e - ay, ai, a
i...e - i, y, ie
o...e - oa, ow, o

Skill: C(sp)12

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells words containing diphthongs (au, aw, oi, oy, ou, ow).

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student hears the vowel sound in a one-syllable word and generates the corresponding diphthong.

The student also applies the following specific rules: /ô/ is often spelled with aw at the end of a word and before k, l, and n (e.g., saw, hawk, bawl, lawn); /oi/ is spelled with oi in the middle of a word (e.g., boil) and with oy at the end of a word (e.g., boy); /ou/ is spelled with ow at the end of a word or before a final n (e.g., cow, town) and with ou in all other positions.

Comment: Although au and aw have been specified for inclusion in this skill, they are not actually phonemic dipthongs. Additionally, au is not assessed because it is not generally taught by this grade level.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which letters finish the word?

My dog will gr____ loudly.

A. owl
B. oul
C. ool
D. awl

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence containing a word with the target spelling. A blank is placed where the spelling belongs. The student is given four choices from which to select the correct spelling.

For words in which the target spelling is medial (e.g., town), only the initial consonant is given. This permits the use of distractors that employ the vowel-consonant-e pattern (e.g., tone).

C(sp)12 (continued)

Spellings are listed below with their best distractors. The distractors reflect common spelling errors that generally derive from sound or letter confusions.

aw - au, ow, o, a
oi - oy, oe, o...e
oy - oi, oye, oe
ou - ow, o...e, au, aw, oo
ow - ou, o...e, aw, oo

Skill: C(sp)13

Skill Statement: Identifies/uses syllabication in spelling words.

Comment: This skill is not assessed for Spelling because it is essentially covered by Skill C(m)22: Uses hyphen in hyphenated words and in break of word at end of line.

Skill: C(sp)14

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells word using derivations: prefixes.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student recognizes that certain words are formed by the addition of a prefix to a root word. Given a root word, the student generates the appropriate prefix to spell a meaningful word.

The prefixes to be assessed at this level are a- and un-. The student understands that the prefix un- frequently means "not" (e.g., unhappy), but sometimes means that an operation is reversed (e.g., unwind). The prefix a- has little meaning in modern English.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which letter or letters complete the word?

1. We will have to walk __cross the street.

   A. a
   B. u
   C. ac
   D. be

2. Juan is always early. It's very ___usual for him to be late.

   A. un
   B. unn
   C. in
   D. en

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence containing an unprefixed word. A blank is placed where the assessed prefix belongs. The student selects the correctly spelled prefix from four choices.

C(sp)14 (continued)

In addition to the correct answer (choice A), answer choices include a letter or letters representing a likely spelling confusion (choice B), and two prefixes that may be confused with the assessed prefix on the basis of sound, meaning, or grammar (choices C and D). A distractor that creates a word similar in meaning to the correct answer should not be used (e.g., discover for uncover).

Skill: C(sp)15

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells words using derivations: suffixes.

Comment: This skill is not assessed because the derivational suffixes appropriate for this assessment are assessed by the following skills:

C(sp)22: Identifies and spells words by changing words to adjectives by adding -able and/or -ful.

C(sp)23: Identifies and spells words by changing root words through adding noun-forming endings (e.g., -er, -ness, -tion).

C(sp)24: Identifies and spells words by changing root words through adding the adverb-forming ending ly.

C(sp)26: Changes the spelling and/or sound of a root word when adding certain suffixes (e.g., musician, instruction).

Skill: C(sp)16

Skill Statement: Writes contractions from paired words and writes paired words from contractions.

Comment: This skill is not assessed for Spelling because it is essentially covered by Skill C(w)06: Constructs contractions from paired words and writes paired words from contractions.

Skill: C(sp)17

Skill Statement: Identifies the schwa /ə/ sound in words and uses the letters it represents in spelling.

Comment: This skill is not identified by LAUSD for SES assessment.

Skill: C(sp)18

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells correctly r-controlled vowel sounds.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student hears the vowel-r sound in a word and generates the corresponding letters.

The vowel-r spellings assessed are /är/-ar, /er/-air, /er/-are, /er/-ear, /ėr/-er, /ėr/-ir, /ėr/-ur, /ėr/-or, /ir/-ear, /ôr/-or, /ôr/-ore.

The student understands that ar is the regular spelling for the /är/ sound; /er/ spelled with are occurs only at the end of words, and /er/ spelled with ear appears only in bear, pear, swear, tear, and wear; while the er, ir, ur, and ear spellings of /ėr/ cannot be predicted, the or spelling occurs only after the letter w; /ir/ is commonly spelled with ear; /ôr/ is spelled with or before consonants and with ore at the ends of words.

Spellings with the vowel-r pattern are particularly difficult for many students because /r/ often changes the pronunciation of the preceding vowel. Additionally, pronunciation of vowel-r sounds varies among speakers from specific dialect backgrounds. Those who speak r-less dialects may not hear the /r/ in certain words. Such students must rely heavily on visual memory in spelling vowel-r words.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which letter or letters complete the word?

Did you l_____n how to swim at camp?

A. ear
B. er
C. ir
D. ur

C(sp)18 (continued)

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence that employs a vowel-r word. A blank is placed where the target spelling belongs. The student selects the correct answer (choice A) from four spellings.

Many of the vowel-r words common to this level are homophones (e.g., stare-stair, hear-here). Homophones are assessed by Skill C(w)09 and are not used as target words for this skill.

Distractors differ with each sound assessed, but generally include alternate spellings for the same sound or sound confusions. Spellings are listed below with their best distractors.

ar - or, a, o, ur
air - are, ere, ear, er, ar
are - air, ere, ear, er, ar
ear (/er/) - are, air, ere, er, ar
er - ur, ir, r
ir - ur, er, r
ur - er, ir, r
ear (/ėr/) - ur, ir, er, r
or (/ėr/) - ur, er, ir, r
ear (/ir/) - eer, ere, er, ir
or (/ôr/) - ar, o, u, a, ur
ore - oar, or, ar

Skill: C(sp)19

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells plurals of words by changing f to v and adding es.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student recognizes that the plural of certain root words that end with f or fe is formed by changing the f or fe to v and adding -es (e.g., calf-calves, wife-wives).

The student also recognizes that, while there are exceptions to this rule (e.g., chef-chefs, safe-safes), the proper mode of affixation can be predicted on the basis of sound. If /vz/ is heard at the end of the plural word, then the rule is applied. If /s/ is heard at the end of the plural word, the proper suffix is the letter s and no change in the root word is required.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which spelling is correct? Remember the rules you have learned about adding endings to words.

shelf + s

A. shelves
B. shelfs
C. shelvs

Item Description

The stimulus is the root word and the letter s, separated by a plus sign. The student selects the correctly suffixed word from three different spellings.

In addition to the correct answer (choice A), choices include the unmodified root word plus the plural suffix -s (choice B), and the modified root word (f changed to v) with the improper suffix (-s instead of -es).

Skill: C(sp)20

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells plurals or other inflected word forms by changing y to i and adding es.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student recognizes that the addition of certain suffixes to a root word often requires a modification in the spelling of the root word. The student applies the rule that when the suffix -es is added to a root word that ends with the single vowel y, the y must be changed to the letter i. The student understands that this rule does not apply to root words ending with the two-letter vowels ay, ey, and oy.

Comment: This rule (changing y to i) is applied with the addition of any suffix except for suffixes beginning with i.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which spelling is correct? Remember the rules you have learned about adding endings to words.

enemy + s

A. enemies
B. enemys
C. enemes

Item Description

The stimulus is the root word and the letter s, separated by a plus sign. The student selects the correctly suffixed word from three different spellings.

In addition to the correct answer (choice A), choices include the unmodified root word plus the plural suffix -s (choice B), and the improperly modified root word (choice C). This latter choice may be interpreted by some students as changing y to e and adding -s, and by others as dropping the y and adding -es.

Skill: C(sp)21

Skill Statement: Drops final e prior to adding ing suffix.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student recognizes that the addition of a suffix to a root word often requires a modification in the spelling of the root word. The student applies the rule that when the -ing suffix is added to a root word that ends with the single letter e, the final e in the root word must be dropped.

Comment: This rule (dropping e) is applied with the addition of any suffix that begins with a vowel.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which spelling is correct? Remember the rules you have learned about adding endings to words.

hope + ing

A. hoping
B. hopeing
C. hopping

Item Description

The stimulus is the root word and the suffix -ing, separated by a plus sign. The student selects the correctly suffixed word from three different spellings.

In addition to the correct answer (choice A), choices include the unmodified root word with the suffix -ing (choice B), and the improperly modified root word (e dropped and final consonant doubled) with the suffix -ing (choice C).

Skill: C(sp)22

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells words by changing words to adjectives by adding -able and/or -ful.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student recognizes that suffixes must often be added to root words in order to form adjectives. Given a root word, the student forms an adjective by adding either -able or -ful.

Formal knowledge of grammatical terms and concepts is not a prerequisite to this skill. The student may be aware that the suffix -able is similar in meaning to the word able, and that the suffix -ful is similar in meaning to the word full.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which spelling is correct? Remember the rules you have learned about adding endings to words.

1. value + able

   A. valuable
   B. valueable
   C. valuble

2. break + able

   A. breakable
   B. breakible
   C. breakabel

3. help + ful

   A. helpful
   B. helpfull
   C. helpfil

C(sp)22 (continued)

Item Description

The stimulus is the root word and the target suffix, separated by a plus sign. The student selects the correctly suffixed word from three different spellings.

Although this skill does not specifically call for the modification of the root word prior to the addition of the suffix, it is difficult to construct appropriate distractors for the suffix -able (and other vowel-beginning suffixes) within the constraints of the given format without requiring such modification. Item 1 is an example of a root word requiring a modification in spelling prior to adding the suffix. Choice B (the unmodified root word plus the suffix) and choice C (a phonemic misspelling) are both likely errors. Item 2 shows a root word that does not require modification prior to adding the suffix. The distractors for this item focus on phonemic or graphic confusions within the suffix itself. Given the fact that the stimulus shows the correct spelling of the suffix, these are unlikely choices. Item 3, which assesses the consonant beginning suffix -ful, is subject to the same restrictions as item 2 since it can be added to a root word without requiring a modification in the spelling of the root word.

Skill: C(sp)23

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells words by changing root words through adding noun-forming endings (e.g., -er, -ness, -tion).

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student recognizes that suffixes must often be added to root words in order to form nouns. Given a root word, the student forms a noun by adding a suffix.

The suffixes that may be employed in assessing this skill are -age (e.g., breakage), -ance (e.g., attendance), -ence (e.g., difference), -er (e.g., folder), -ion (e.g., collection), -ment (e.g., shipment), -ness (e.g., kindness), -or (e.g., collector), -ure (e.g., failure). These suffixes are commonly taught prior to the end of the sixth grade.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which spelling is correct? Remember the rules you have learned about adding endings to words.

1. operate + ion

   A. operation
   B. operateion
   C. operattion

2. differ + ence

   A. difference
   B. differrence
   C. diffrence

Item Description

The stimulus is the root word and the target suffix, separated by a plus sign. The student selects the correctly suffixed word from three different spellings.

C(sp)23 (continued)

Although this skill does not specifically call for the modification of the root word prior to the addition of the suffix, it is difficult to construct appropriate distractors for many of the vowel-beginning suffixes within the constraints of the given format without requiring such modification.

Item 1 is an example of a root word requiring a modification in spelling prior to adding the suffix. Choice D (the unmodified root word plus the suffix) and choice C (dropping the final e and doubling the final consonant before adding the suffix) are both feasible errors.

Item 2 is an example of a root word that requires no modification before adding the suffix. Choice B is a distractor in which the final consonant is doubled, while choice C reflects a misspelling caused by a sound confusion. Many root words, however, do not lend themselves to effective selected-response assessment. For example, the stimulus fold + er is unlikely to elicit either foldur or foldder. Thus, items requiring a modification in the root word usually permit the construction of better distractors and are employed in assessing this skill.

Skill: C(sp)24

Skill Statement: Identifies and spells words by changing root words through adding the adverb-forming ending ly.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student recognizes that the suffix -ly is often added to an adjective in order to form an adverb. Given a root word (an adjective), the student forms an adverb by adding the suffix -ly. The student also applies the rule that, since -ly begins with a consonant, it can be added directly to a root word.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which spelling is correct? Remember the rules you have learned about adding endings to words.

1. loose + ly

   A. loosely
   B. loosly
   C. losely

2. sad + ly

   A. sadly
   B. saddly
   C. sadily

Item Description

The stimulus is the root word and the suffix -ly, separated by a plus sign. The student selects the correctly suffixed word from three different spellings.

The construction of distractors for this skill is governed by the spelling of the root word. If the root word ends with the letter e (item 1), distractors focus on modifications within the root word. Choice B for item 1 shows the final e dropped in the root word, while choice C shows a vowel modification in the root word.

If the stimulus word ends with a consonant (item 2), then one distractor displays a doubled final consonant (choice B), while the other distractor indicates a sound confusion in forming the suffixed word (choice C).

Skill: C(sp)25

Skill Statement: Forms irregular plurals by changing root words (e.g., man, men).

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student recognizes that the plural form of some nouns is formed by changing the spelling of the root word. Given a root word, the student modifies the spelling of the root word to form the correct plural.

The singular/plural word pairs that may be assessed by this skill are child-children, foot-feet, goose-geese, man-men, mouse-mice, ox-oxen, tooth-teeth, woman-women.

The plural forms of words ending in the letter o (e.g., radio-radios, potato-potatoes) and the unchanging plural forms (e.g., fish, deer) are not widely taught at this level and are not included in this assessment. The assessment of plurals that are formed by changing f to v and adding -es is assessed by Skill C(sp)19 and is not included here.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word completes the sentence?

Sandy is raising two pet ducks and three _______.

A. geese
B. gooses
C. goose

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence that employs the plural form of the target word in an unambiguous manner. A blank is placed where the plural belongs. The student must select the correct plural form from three choices.

In addition to the correct answer (choice A), choices include the root word plus the suffix -s or -es (choice B), and the unmodified root word (choice C).

Skill: C(sp)26

Skill Statement: Changes the spelling and/or sound of a root word when adding certain suffixes (e.g., musician, instruction).

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student recognizes that the addition of a suffix to a root word often changes the spelling and/or sound of a root word. Given a root word and a suffix, the student properly modifies the root word and generates a suffixed form of the word.

The spelling changes that may be assessed by this skill are be to pt, d(e) to s, t to ss, er to r, y to ic.

The student also applies the following specific rules:

be becomes pt when adding the suffixes -ion or -ive to words containing the Latin root scribe (e.g., subscribe-subscription, describe-descriptive).

d or de becomes s when adding the suffixes -ion or -ive to root words ending in those letters (e.g., extend-extension, conclude-conclusive).

t becomes ss when adding the suffixes -ion or -ive to words containing the Latin root mit (e.g., admit-admission, permit-permissive).

er becomes r when certain suffixes are added to some words ending in er (e.g., anger-angry, enter-entrance, center-central).

y at the end of a root word is dropped before adding the suffix -ic (e.g., history-historic). This rule also applies when -ic occurs in a word with multiple suffixes (e.g., multiply-multiplication, apply-applicant).

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which spelling is correct? Remember the rules you have learned about adding endings to words.

anger + y

A. angry
B. angery
C. angerry

C(sp)26 (continued)

Item Description

The stimulus is the root word and a suffix, separated by a plus sign. The student selects the correctly suffixed word from three different spellings.

The nature of the distractors employed in assessing this skill vary in accordance with the spelling change and the suffix chosen to assess the skill. Some items may effectively employ the root word plus the suffix without any changes in the root word (choice B in the sample item). If the root word ends in a consonant, doubling the final consonant often creates an effective distractor (choice C in the sample item).

Skill: C(sp)27

Skill Statement: Doubles the final consonant before adding ed or ing when the word ends in a single consonant preceded by a short vowel sound.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student recognizes that the addition of a suffix to a root word often requires a modification in the spelling of the root word. The student applies the rule that when the -ed and -ing suffixes are added to a root word that ends with a single consonant letter preceded by a single vowel letter, the final consonant in the root word must be doubled.

Comment: This rule (consonant doubling) is applied with the addition of any suffix that begins with a vowel. However, the letters x, w, and y do not double (the latter two function as vowels at the ends of words).

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which spelling* is correct? Remember the rules you have learned about adding endings to words.

shop + ing

A. shopping
B. shoping
C. shopeing

Item Description

The stimulus is the root word and the suffix -ed or -ing, separated by a plus sign. The student selects the correctly suffixed word from three different spellings.

In addition to the correct answer (choice A in the sample item), one distractor includes the suffixed root word without a doubled consonant (choice B). When the -ing suffix is used, the second distractor adds an e to the root word before attaching the suffix. When the -ed suffix is used, the second distractor is the root word with a doubled consonant plus the letter d (e.g., shoppd).

MECHANICS IN WRITING

The skills in the Mechanics in Writing category cover both capitalization (Skills 01-11) and punctuation (Skills 12-23).

Assessment for capitalization skills usually requires students to choose the word that should be capitalized in a sentence. Except for Skill C(m)02 (Capitalizes first letter in first word in sentence), the correct answer is never the first word in the sentence; otherwise, the skill being assessed would be confounded with Skill C(m)02.

Assessment for punctuation skills usually requires students to choose the punctuation mark that correctly belongs in a specified sentence location. In order to provide a sufficient number of answer choices, the distractor response "none of these (marks)" is often used. According to testing theory, if a "none of these" response is used as an answer choice, it should also be the correct response for at least one item in the assessment. However, such items (i.e., items that do not require punctuation) do not conform to the LAUSD skill statements. Moreover, on the 1979 SES, students did not perform well on items where no punctuation was the correct response. Therefore, "none of these (marks)" is not used as a correct response for any item.

MECHANICS IN WRITING (m)

CAPITALIZATION SKILLS	1	2	3	4	5	6
01. Capitalizes first letters in names of persons.			x			
02. Capitalizes first letter in first word in sentence.			x			
03. Capitalizes the personal pronoun "I."		x				
04. Capitalizes the first letter in names of days of week, special days, months, streets, and cities.				x		
05. Capitalizes the first letters in titles, Mrs., Miss, Ms., Mr., and Dr.					x	
06. Capitalizes the first letters in names of states and countries.					x	
07. Uses capital letters in abbreviations.*						
08. Capitalizes first word in greetings and closing of letters, invitations, and notes.				x		
09. Capitalizes each topic in an outline.**						
10. Capitalizes first word in a direct quotation.				x		
11. Capitalizes the first, last, and important words in a title or bibliography.					x	

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*See Skill C(m)05

**See Skill C(o)03

MECHANICS IN WRITING (continued)

PUNCTUATION SKILLS	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Uses period to end sentence.		x				
13. Uses question mark to end sentence.		x				
14. Uses periods at end of abbreviations and initials.*						
15. Uses comma when writing the date.				x		
16. Uses comma between city and state.				x		
17. Uses comma to separate items in a series.					x	
18. Uses comma after direct address.						x
19. Identifies and uses exclamation point appropriately.					x	
20. Uses comma in quotation.					x	
21. Uses apostrophe in singular and plural possessive forms.				x		x
22. Uses hyphen in hyphenated words and in break of word at end of line.					x	
23. Uses the colon when writing dialogue or the greeting in a letter and when introducing a series.						x

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*See Skill C(m)05

Skill: C(m)01

Skill Statement: Capitalizes first letters in names of persons.

Grade: 3

Skill Description

The student uses a capital letter to begin a personal name (first name and surname).

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital* letter?

1. Today we met jeff at the party.
   A B C D

2. We played a game with Billy green.
   A B C D

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence containing an uncapitalized first name (item 1) or an uncapitalized surname (item 2). The student selects the letter corresponding to the uncapitalized personal name (choices C and D, respectively). Distractors are other words in the sentence.

Comment: Surnames used in these items are preceded by a first name or title to ensure recognition. Common nouns and adjectives that are within the grade-level reading vocabulary can be used as surnames (e.g., green becomes Billy Green).

Skill: C(m)02

Skill Statement: Capitalizes first letter in first word in sentence.

Grade: 3

Skill Description

The student uses a capital letter to begin the initial word in a sentence. The term sentence should be interpreted rather loosely in this context because students at this grade level are often not capable of composing or identifying grammatically complete sentences. Nevertheless, students should be expected to capitalize the first word of those phrases or clauses that they interpret as sentences; e.g.:

My dog has a favorite toy. A ball with a bell in it.

However, sentence fragments are not used as assessment items.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital* letter?

1. please take my picture.
   A B C D

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence with the first word uncapitalized. The student selects the letter corresponding to the first word of the sentence. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

Comment: Items of this type have an inherent problem in that the correct response is always choice A. Students who recognize this pattern could conceivably respond without ever reading the items. However, this problem is alleviated in the SES by combining these items with the items for Skill C(m)01: Capitalizes first letters in names of persons; e.g.:

1. We played a game with Billy green.
   A B C D

2. please take my picture.
   A B C D

Skill: C(m)03

Skill Statement: Capitalizes the personal pronoun "I."

Grade: 2

Skill Description

The student uses a capital letter to write the personal pronoun I. Knowledge of the technical term personal pronoun is not prerequisite to this skill.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which letter should be a capital letter in the sentence?

```
1. Bill and i will play a game.
            A    B      C
```

Item Description

The stimulus is a simple sentence containing the uncapitalized pronoun i. The student selects the letter corresponding to the i. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

Skill: C(m)04

Skill Statement: Capitalizes the first letter in names of days of week, special days, months, streets, and cities.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student capitalizes words from the following categories:

Category	Examples
1. days of the week	Saturday
2. special days (holidays)	Thanksgiving, Memorial Day
3. months of the year	July
4. streets	Hill Street, Pine Road
5. cities	Oakland

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital* letter?

1. We are going to the beach next saturday afternoon.
A B C D

2. My family had a big dinner on thanksgiving Day.
A B C D

3. Fran's birthday is in july.
A B C D

4. My friend lives over on pine Road.
A B C D

5. Last summer we moved to a house on Main street.
A B C D

6. Many people live in the city of oakland.
A B C D

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence with one word requiring capitalization. The student selects the letter corresponding to the word that should be capitalized. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

C(m)04 continued

The following are comments regarding the appropriate content for assessment:

1. Days: Any day of the week may be chosen for assessment.

2. Special Days: Although the names of special days and holidays may not be within the students' reading vocabularies, most students should be familiar with national holidays. In addition, the stimulus can incorporate clues by referring to traditional activities usually performed on these holidays (e.g., "a big dinner on Thanksgiving Day," or "fireworks on Independence Day").

3. Months: Any month may be chosen for assessment. Since the names of the months should be familiar to students, it is not necessary to identify them in the stimulus (e.g., Fran's birthday is in the month of July).

4. Streets: There are two options available for assessing capitalization of streets: (1) capitalization of the name of the street (see item 4) or (2) capitalization of Street, Road, or Drive following the name (see item 5).

   Street names can be selected from common nouns and adjectives that are within the students' reading vocabularies (e.g., Pine, Mountain). The words street, road, and drive are acceptable, although drive may be less familiar in this context. Avenue and Boulevard are not used since they may not be within the reading vocabulary.

5. Cities: Names of cities can be developed from common nouns and adjectives (e.g., oak + land). In addition, the names of cities in the metropolitan Los Angeles area should be considered for inclusion since they are likely to be familiar to students. The fact that a city name is being used should be clearly indicated (e.g., city of Oakland). The words city, town, and village are appropriate for this grade level.

Skill: C(m)05

Skill Statement: Capitalizes the first letter in titles, Mrs., Miss, Ms., Mr., and Dr.

Grade: 5

Skill Description

The student uses a capital letter to begin the personal title Miss and the abbreviated personal titles Mrs., Ms., Mr., and Dr. Recognition of the abbreviations as personal titles is prerequisite to this skill.

Assessment

Comment: To facilitate assessment, this skill is combined with Skill C(m)14: Uses periods at end of abbreviations, and initials; and with Skill C(m)07: Uses capital letters in abbreviations [i.e., initials in names of persons].

Sample Items

Directions: Which name is capitalized* and punctuated* correctly?

1. A. Mrs. Hill
   B. Mrs Hill
   C. mrs. Hill
   D. mrs Hill

2. A. Cecilia T. Díaz
   B. Cecilia T Díaz
   C. Cecilia t. Díaz
   D. Cecilia t Díaz

Item Description

The student selects the name in which a title (item 1) or an initial (item 2) is capitalized and punctuated correctly (choice A). Distractors are of three types:

(1) choice B contains an abbreviation/initial that is capitalized correctly, but is not punctuated;
(2) choice C contains an abbreviation/initial that is punctuated correctly, but is not capitalized;
(3) choice D contains an abbreviation/initial that is neither capitalized nor punctuated.

Skill: C(m)06

Skill Statement: Capitalizes the first letters in names of states and countries.

Grade: 5

Skill Description

The student uses a capital letter to begin the names of states and countries.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which word should be capitalized*?

1. Steve's family lives on a ranch in the state of
A B C
texas.
D

2. My friend went to canada for her vacation.
A B C D

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence containing the uncapitalized name of a state (item 1) or country (item 2). The student selects the letter corresponding to the name of the state or country. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

The following are comments on the appropriate content for assessment:

1. States: Since state names may not be within the students' reading vocabularies, the word state is included in the stimulus as a clue. However, state is not used as a distractor. State names used in the assessment are relatively short and easy to read (e.g., Texas).

2. Countries: Names of countries are also short and easy to read. Furthermore, names of familiar countries are used rather than less well-known countries. For example, Canada and France are appropriate, but names such as Guatemala are not.

Skill: C(m)07

Skill Statement: Uses capital letters in abbreviations.

Comment: To facilitate assessment, this skill is combined with Skill C(m)05: Capitalizes the first letter in titles, Mrs., Miss, Ms., Mr., and Dr.

Skill: C(m)08

Skill Statement: Capitalizes first word in greetings and closings of letters, invitations, and notes.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student capitalizes the word Dear in the greeting of a letter. The student also capitalizes the first word in the complimentary closing of a letter (e.g., Your friend).

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which greeting is correct for a letter?

1. A. Dear Ben,
   B. dear Ben,
   C. dear ben,

Directions: Which closing is correct for a letter?

2. A. Your friend,
   B. Your Friend,
   C. your friend,

Item Description

In item 1, the student selects the greeting that is capitalized correctly (choice A). Distractors are (1) a greeting in which dear is not capitalized (choice B) and (2) a greeting in which dear and the personal name are not capitalized (choice C).

> Comment: Although capitalization of personal names is not covered by this skill, choice C is included to provide a better range of distractors (see Skill C(m)01: Capitalizes first letters in names of persons).

In item 2, the student selects the complimentary closing that is capitalized correctly (choice A). Distractors are (1) a closing in which both words are capitalized (choice B) and (2) a closing in which neither word is capitalized (choice C).

Skill: C(m)09

Skill Statement: Capitalizes each topic in an outline.

Comment: This skill is assessed by items for Skill C(o)03: Constructs an outline independently.

Skill: C(m)10

Skill Statement: Capitalizes first word in a direct quotation.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student uses a capital letter to begin the first word in a dialogue quotation. Implicit in this skill is the ability to distinguish a dialogue quotation (enclosed in quotation marks) from the rest of the sentence.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital* letter?

1. Miguel said, "that coat is mine."
A B C D

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence containing a dialogue quotation, the first word of which is uncapitalized. The student selects the letter corresponding to the first word of the dialogue quotation (choice B). Distractors are other words in the sentence.

The initial word in the quotation is not a proper noun, personal title, or the personal pronoun I. Capitalization of these words is assessed by separate skills in the SES. Furthermore, the quotation is not positioned at the beginning of the complete sentence.

A variety of sentence types (declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory) may be used in the assessment.

Skill: C(m)11

Skill Statement: Capitalizes the first, last, and important words in a title or bibliography.

Grade: 5

Skill Description

Comment: The skill statement suggests that two separate tasks are required, i.e., capitalizing titles and capitalizing bibliographies. However, capitalization of titles seems to be the intent of the skill. Bibliographies are lists of titles (along with their respective authors, publishers, and publication dates).

The student capitalizes the first, last, and important words in the title of a book or story. "Important" words are generally defined as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and all function words that are at least five letters long.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word should be capitalized*?

1. *The dollar Dragon* is a book about a magic toy.
   A B C D

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence containing a book title with one of its important words uncapitalized. The student selects the letter corresponding to the word in the book title. Distractors are other words in the sentence. The stimulus clearly identifies the title as that of a book. Moreover, the title is underlined (or italicized) so that the student can easily identify it as a title.

Skill: C(m)12

Skill Statement: Uses period to end sentence.

Grade: 2

Skill Description

Recognizing the need for terminal punctuation, the student uses a period to end a declarative sentence (which may be known to the student as a "statement" or "telling sentence").

Comment: Imperative sentences also end with a period. However, elementary textbooks usually do not teach imperative sentences at this grade level.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which punctuation mark should go in the blank in the sentence? If none of these marks is right, fill in the answer none of these.

1. Annie looked at the cat___

A. .
B. ,
C. none of these

Item Description

The stimulus is a declarative sentence with a blank replacing the terminal punctuation. The student selects the period to fill in the blank. Distractors are a comma and none of these. A question mark or an exclamation point cannot be used as a distractor because neither would be wrong (e.g., Annie looked at the cat?/!). Other punctuation marks (e.g., semicolon or colon) are not used as distractors because they are generally not familiar to students at this grade level.

Skill: C(m)13

Skill Statement: Uses question mark to end sentence.

Grade: 2

Skill Description

Recognizing the need for terminal punctuation, the student uses a question mark to end an interrogative sentence (which may be known to the student as a question or "asking sentence").

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which punctuation mark should go in the blank in the sentence? If none of these marks is right, fill in the answer none of these.

1. Where do you go to school___

A. ?
B. .
C. none of these

Item Description

The stimulus is an interrogative sentence with a blank replacing the terminal punctuation. The student selects the question mark to fill in the blank. Distractors are a period and none of these. Other punctuation marks (e.g., semicolon or colon) are not used because they are generally not familiar to students at this grade level. Interrogative sentences used in the assessment may be (1) questions beginning with an interrogative pronoun or adverb (e.g., who, how) or (2) questions beginning with forms of be or auxiliary verbs (e.g., Is he your teacher?; Can you find the ball?).

Skill: C(m)14

Skill Statement: Uses periods at end of abbreviations and initials.

Comment: To facilitate assessment, this skill is combined with Skill C(m)05: Capitalizes the first letter in titles, Mrs., Miss, Ms., Mr., and Dr.

Skill: C(m)15

Skill Statement: Uses comma when writing the date.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student places a comma between the day of the month and the year when writing the date (e.g., May 2, 1980).

Comment: If the date occurs in the middle of a sentence, a comma is also required after the year (e.g., On May 2, 1980, Mary will be ten years old). If the day of the month is not included in the date, a comma follows the month (e.g., May, 1980). However, these two uses of the comma are not commonly taught in elementary textbooks. Therefore assessment of this skill is limited to the use of a comma between the day of the month and the year.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which mark is missing?

1. May 2__ 1980

A. ,
B. ?
C. .
D. !

Item Description

The stimulus is a date with a blank following the day of the month. The student selects the comma to insert in the position indicated by the blank. Distractors are a question mark, a period, and an exclamation point.

Skill: C(m)16

Skill Statement: Uses comma between city and state.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

The student places a comma between the name of a city and the state in which it is located (e.g., Long Beach, California).

Comment: If the names of the city and state occur in the middle of a sentence, a comma is also required after the state (e.g., They moved to Long Beach, California, last year). However, most textbooks do not teach this use of the comma at this grade level. Consequently, students are required to use a comma only between the city and state.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Long Beach is a city. California* is a state. Which mark is missing?

1. Long Beach__ California*

A. ,
B. ?
C. .
D. !

Item Description

The stimulus is the name of a city followed by a blank and the name of a state. The student selects the comma to insert in the position indicated by the blank. Distractors are a question mark, a period, and an exclamation point.

The city and state are specifically identified in the item directions so that the reading comprehension task is minimized. For further discussion of appropriate city names, see Skill C(m)04: Capitalizes first letter in names of days of week, special days, months, streets, and cities.

Skill: C(m)17

Skill Statement: Uses comma to separate items in a series.

Grade: 5

Skill Description

The student uses a comma to separate nouns (with their modifiers) in a series (e.g., We had bacon, eggs, and toast for breakfast).

Comment: Adjectives, adverbs, prepositonal phrases, verb phrases, and clauses can also be written in a series. However, elementary textbooks commonly teach this skill only with nouns at this grade level.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which punctuation* mark should go in the blank?

1. There were lions__ tigers, and elephants at the circus.

   A. ,
   B. !
   C. .
   D. none of these marks

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence that contains three nouns in a series. The student selects the comma to insert in the position indicated by the blank after the first noun. Distractors are an exclamation point, a period, and none of these marks.

Comment: Most authorities agree that a comma should be placed before the conjunction (usually and) preceding the last item in a series. However, this comma is sometimes omitted in printed text. Therefore, this item includes the comma before the conjunction. Students are only expected to use a comma to separate the other items in the series.

C(m)17 (continued)

The items in the series are limited to common nouns. If proper nouns are used, the student might mistake the adjacent nouns as first and last names (e.g., Fred__ Henry, and John); thus none of these marks could be a correct response.

The number of nouns in the series is limited to three so that the stimulus does not become unnecessarily long.

Skill: C(m)18

Skill Statement: Uses comma after direct address.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student uses a comma after a noun of direct address to separate the noun from the rest of the sentence in which it occurs (e.g., Jan, here are your shoes).

Comment: Nouns of direct address also commonly occur at the end of a sentence, where they require a comma to precede them (e.g., What are you doing, Pete?). However, only the use of a comma following a noun of direct address is assessed here.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which punctuation* mark should go in the blank?

1. Billy__ are you finished yet?

A. ,
B. .
C. ?
D. none of these marks

Item Description

The stimulus is a sentence containing a noun of direct address in the initial position. The student selects the comma to insert in the space indicated by the blank following the noun. Distractors are a period, a question mark, and none of these marks.

Skill: C(m)19

Skill Statement: Identifies and uses exclamation point appropriately.

Grade: 5

Skill Description

Recognizing the need for terminal punctuation, the student uses an exclamation point to end an exclamatory sentence (which may be known to the student as a sentence that shows strong feeling).

Comment: Implicit in this skill is the ability to determine the "strong feeling" of a sentence. However, this is usually dependent upon the sentence's oral context. That is, a sentence becomes exclamatory when it is spoken with strong feeling. In writing, the use of the exclamation point is often a matter of subjective judgement, and the student "defines" an exclamatory sentence by punctuating it with an exclamation point. (For further discussion of this problem, see Skill C(s)04: Identifies and writes declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative sentences.)

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which punctuation* mark should go in the blank*?

1. Sandy shouted, "The horses are running away__"

A. !
B. ,
C. ?
D. none of these marks

Item Description

The stimulus is an exclamatory sentence (within quotation marks) with a blank replacing the terminal punctuation. The student selects the exclamation point to insert in the position indicated by the blank. Distractors are a comma, a question mark, and none of these marks. A period is not used as a distractor because it would not necessarily be incorrect. The exclamatory sentence is presented as a dialogue quotation so that strong emotion can be suggested by the speaker tag (e.g., Sandy shouted). Furthermore, the dialogue exclamation is positioned at the end of the sentence so that the use of terminal punctuation is assessed and not other skills of dialogue punctuation.

Skill: C(m)20

Skill Statement: Uses comma in quotation.

Grade: 5

Skill Description

The student uses a comma to separate a dialogue quotation from its speaker tag. If the speaker tag precedes the quotation, the comma follows the tag; e.g.:

Bill asked, "May I have some cake?"

If the speaker tag follows the quotation, the comma is placed after the last word of the quotation, and it is enclosed by the quotation marks; e.g.:

"We're leaving now," Lisa said.

Comment: If the quotation is an interrogative or exclamatory sentence and the tag follows the quotation, a question mark or exclamation point is used in place of the comma (e.g., "Where is my homework?" José said). However, this punctuation is not included at this grade level. Moreover, interrupted dialogue, which requires two commas (e.g., "I'm tired," José said, "but I'll finish my homework"), is also inappropriate for this grade level.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which sentence is punctuated* correctly?

1. A. Julie asked, "Do you want to play baseball?"
   B. Julie asked "Do you want to play baseball?"
   C. Julie, asked "Do you want to play baseball?"

2. A. "I finished my homework," José said.
   B. "I finished my homework" José said.
   C. "I finished my homework", José said.

Item Description

The stimulus is a set of three sentences containing a dialogue quotation. The student selects the sentence in which the speaker tag and the quotation are separated correctly by a comma (choice A). Distractors are (1) a sentence in which no punctuation is used between the tag and the quotation (choice B) and (2) a sentence in which the comma is placed in the wrong position (choice C).

C(m)20 (continued)

Only three answer choices are used in these items because the items become visually confusing with a larger number of distractors. In addition, the sentences for each item are presented directly below one another so that visual comparison among them is easier.

Skill: C(m)21

Skill Statement: Uses apostrophe in singular and plural possessive forms.

Grade: 4

Skill Description

At this grade level, the student uses apostrophes correctly in singular possessive forms. The student must identify the correct position of the apostrophe in the singular possessive (i.e., between the root word and the s). Singular possessives may be formed from proper or common nouns (e.g., John's/dog's) or from indefinite pronouns (e.g., someone's). However, indefinite pronouns are not included in assessment here because they are not commonly taught in elementary textbooks.

Implicit in this skill is the ability to distinguish between plural forms of nouns and singular possessives. However, students are not expected to distinguish between singular and plural possessives at this grade level.

Knowledge of the technical terms apostrophe and singular possessive is not prerequisite to this skill.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which word is correct?

1. Jenny has an uncle. Jenny likes to visit her ________ house.

A. uncle's
B. uncles
C. uncl'es

Item Description

The first sentence of the stimulus identifies the target noun as singular. The student selects the singular possessive form of the target noun (choice A) to insert in the blank in the second sentence. Distractors are (1) the plural form of the noun (choice B) and (2) a form in which the apostrophe precedes, by one letter, its correct position in the word (choice C).

C(m)21 (continued)

Grade: 6

Skill Description

At this grade level, the student uses apostrophes correctly in plural possessive forms. Concomitantly, the student must identify the correct position of the apostrophe in plural possessives. The correct position of the apostrophe in regular plural possessives is after the *s* plural marker (e.g., *boys*-*boys'*). The correct form for irregular plural nouns not ending with *s* is -*'s* (e.g., *children*-*children's*). The student must also be able to distinguish between singular and plural possessives and between possessives and plural forms of nouns.

Knowledge of the technical terms *apostrophe* and *plural possessive* is not prerequisite to this skill.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which word should go in the blank?

1. Isabel has two parrots. Both ____ beaks are very sharp.

   A. parrots'
   B. parrots
   C. parrot's

2. The _______ gifts are on the table.

   A. children's
   B. childrens
   C. childrens'

3. Juan has a cat. The _______ tail is long.

   A. cat's
   B. cats
   C. cats'

Item Description

In item 1, the first sentence of the stimulus specifies that the target noun is plural. The student selects the plural possessive form of the target noun (choice *A*) to insert in the blank in the second sentence. Distractors are (1) the plural form of the noun (choice *B*) and (2) the singular possessive form of the noun (choice *C*).

C(m)21 (continued)

In item 2, the student selects the possessive form of an irregular plural noun (choice A). Distractors are (1) a form with no apostrophe (choice B) and (2) a form in which the apostrophe follows the s (choice C).

In item 3, the student selects a singular possessive noun (choice A). The target noun in clearly identified as singular in the first sentence of the stimulus. Distractors are (1) the plural form of the noun (choice B) and (2) the plural possessive form of the noun (choice C). At least one item assessing a singular possessive form is included at this grade level so that students may make more discriminating responses.

Skill: C(m)22

Skill Statement: Uses hyphen in hyphenated words and in break of word at end of line.

Grade: 5

Skill Description

Comment: Hyphenated words are not assessed in the SES. Authorities frequently disagree on the structure of a hyphenated compound because the compound is often in the transitional process of becoming one word, as in the word basketball. (This word was originally written basket ball, then basket-ball. Later the hyphen was dropped and the two words were written together.) Therefore, SES assessment is limited to the use of a hyphen in breaking words at the end of a line.

In order to maintain an even margin, the student divides a word at the end of a line. Many authorities recommend against breaking a word at the end of a line; however, if words are to be divided, the following guidelines are often suggested:

(1) Only words with two or more syllables can be divided, and they must be divided between the syllables (e.g., prac-tice not pr-actice). One-syllable words are not divided at the end of a line. Thus the ability to syllabify words is implicit in this skill. (In practice, however, students are usually encouraged to use a dictionary to check the correct syllabification of a word.)

(2) Words should be divided so that at least three letters appear on one line (e.g., enor-mous is acceptable, but e-normous is not).

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which sentence is punctuated* correctly?

1. A. If you want to be on the swimming team, you must prac-
tice every day.

B. If you want to be on the swimming team, you must prac
tice every day.

C. If you want to be on the swimming team, you must pr-
actice every day.

Item Description

The stimulus is a set of three sentences in which one word is divided at the end of the line. The sentences are aligned with each other to facilitate visual comparison. The student selects the sentence in which the divided word is syllabified and punctuated correctly (choice A). Distractors are (1) a sentence in which the divided word is syllabified properly but is not hyphenated (choice B), and (2) a sentence in which the divided word is hyphenated but is not syllabified properly (choice C).

Comments: Although this skill is dependent upon the student's ability to syllabify words, rules for dividing words into syllables are imprecise, at best. Language authorities often disagree on the delineation of syllable boundaries in words, and many authorities even question the usefulness of teaching and assessing syllabification skills.

Because the boundaries of English syllables are imprecisely defined, distractor type C is designed so that the syllable division is obviously incorrect. This is achieved by breaking the word so that the first segment does not contain a vowel (e.g., pr-actice). The student is not required to discriminate between more difficult divisions (e.g., prac-tice vs. pract-ice).

Skill: C(m)23

Skill Statement: Uses the colon when writing dialogue or the greeting of a business letter and when introducing a series.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student places a colon after the greeting in a business letter.

Comment: Colons in the introduction of a series and in playscript dialogue are infrequently used by students. In fact, many elementary textbook series do not teach these two uses of the colon. Consequently, only the use of the colon in the greeting of a business letter is included in SES assessment.

Assessment

Sample Item

Directions: Which greeting is correct for a business letter?

1. A. Dear Ms. Brown:
   B. Dear Ms. Brown,
   C. Dear Ms. Brown.
   D. Dear Ms. Brown

Item Description

The stimulus is a set of four letter greetings. The student selects the greeting that is correctly punctuated with a colon (choice A). Distractors are greetings that are followed by a comma (choice B), a period (choice C), and no punctuation (choice D). Since the comma is used as a distractor, the item directions specify that the greeting is for a business letter (rather than a personal letter).

Comment: Some greetings are not used in the SES: To whom it may concern because this greeting does not appear in elementary textbooks; Dear Madam, Dear Sirs, and Gentlemen because of their implicit sexism.

WRITING SAMPLES

Writing samples are critical components of any assessment of writing ability, for they directly assess the ability to write. Writing samples are included in the SES only for grades 3 and 6. (However, writing samples would also be appropriate in grades 2, 4, and 5. In addition, most authorities recommend that more than one writing sample be administered to permit students sufficient opportunity to display their writing abilities.)

Each writing sample consists of three components: (1) the prompt, which provides students the stimulus and directions for writing; (2) the scoring key, which the teacher marks to evaluate students' writing; and (3) the scoring guide, which provides guidelines for teacher evaluation of student writing.

Evaluation is based on a modified analytic scoring scale. For each prompt, the features that constitute good writing for that specific prompt are identified as evaluation criteria. A student's writing sample is evaluated for each criterion on a three-point scale; the guidelines for interpreting the scale points for each criterion are provided in the scoring guide. Scoring is done by the individual classroom teacher. (The reliability of the scoring could be increased by training teachers to use the scoring key and guide and/or by scoring on a larger-than-classroom basis, e.g., at school, area, or district level.) A detailed description of the scoring system is found in Humes (1980b).

Skills: C(c)06
C(s/d)03

Skill Statements: Creates imaginary characters and writes stories. . . .*
Dictates/writes a description of a person, place, or thing.

Grade: 3

Skill Description

The student constructs a short climactic narrative. A narrative presents an experience to an audience, giving the impression of passage in time. A climactic narrative includes a plot, which entails the selection and organization of events to build toward a climax.

Characters are included in the story. Characters may be included by a number of techniques. The writer may (1) give a direct description of the appearance and personality traits of the character, (2) present the character in activities that enable the reader to infer the character's attributes, (3) reveal reactions to the character from other characters in the story, and (4) present the character's internal reactions to events, people, and surroundings. At this grade level, character development will not generally entail more than the first technique, especially the physical description. Furthermore, students may include characters simply by using their names.

In describing characters, the student selects appropriate attributes that may be unique, salient, and/or evocative. Attributes should be described by sensory language--especially visual language at this level--in specific rather than general terms.

A number of other specific skills must be employed to compose a quality writing sample; these skills are referenced in the scoring guide.

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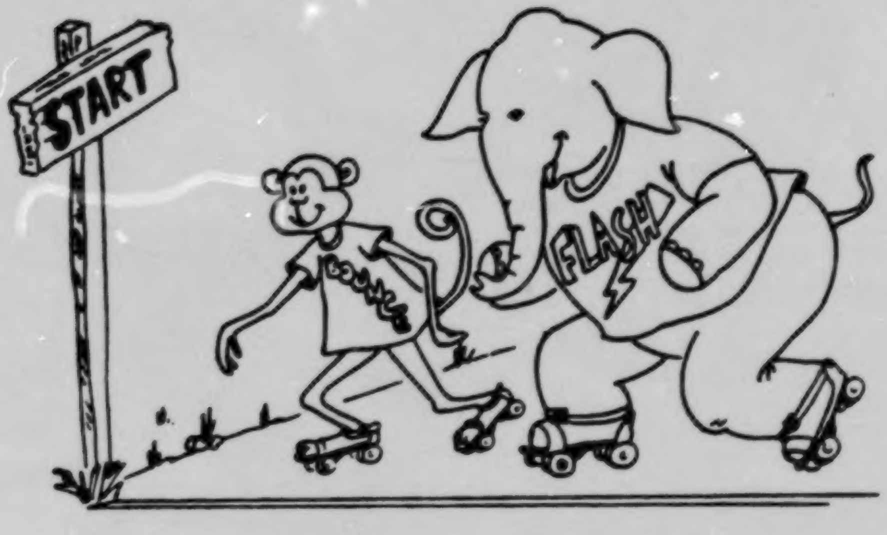
*The rest of this task ("of two or more paragraphs") is not stipulated in the stimulus for the writing sample.

Assessment

Sample Item



Look at the picture of these animals. Both animals are wearing skates. The monkey's name is Bounce. The elephant's name is Flash. Write a story about the picture and the animals in it.

- Tell something about the way the animals look.
- Tell what they do together on their skates.
- Have something strange or funny happen to them.
- Write a good ending for your story.
- Give your story a title.

Item Description

Using descriptive-writing and narrative-writing skills, the student composes a story elicited by the stimulus. The stimulus includes a picture that presents two named characters in a situation that suggests a narrative about a race between them.

The series of instructions on including specific features helps ensure the production of these features and facilitates the construction of an appropriate scoring key that evaluates these features.

Scoring Key

The skills array of the key's matrix consists of the features of good writing that are effected when students employ the content and form skills appropriate at this grade level for this writing task. The skills corresponding to each criterion are listed by continuum number on the subsequent scoring guide. Performance ratings of 3 (good), 2 (acceptable), 1 (unacceptable) are given on each criterion in accordance with the rating considerations that the scoring guide describes. Thus the scoring key can be used to elicit diagnostic information about individual component skills. It can also be used to determine a total writing score by summing the scores.

The skills are ordered to facilitate scoring ease. Thus, for example, "Indents first word" is ordered as the first form skill since the presence/absence of indentation is immediately evident in the sample.

Scoring Criteria	3	2	1
CONTENT:			
Writes a title.	___	___	___
Describes characters.	___	___	___
Writes a story line appropriate for the picture.	___	___	___
Includes an appropriate conclusion.	___	___	___
Shows creativity/originality.	___	___	

Comment: No space is provided for evaluating originality/creativity as "1" because this rating would unfairly assess beyond learned skills. However, this criterion is included to "reward" imagination.

	3	2	1
FORM:			
Indents first word of paragraph.	___		___
Capitalizes first word of sentences.	___	___	___
Includes periods at ends of sentences.	___	___	___
Spells correctly.	___	___	___
Writes legibly.	___	___	___

Comment: No space is provided for evaluating indentation as "2" because students either do or do not indent.

Scoring Guide

The scoring guide describes the guidelines for determining what constitutes a 3, 2, or 1 score on each criterion in the scoring key.

CONTENT: Students are to describe the pictured animals and write a story about the picture. They are to include a strange or funny event, write a "good ending," and give the story a title.

WRITES A TITLE. [Skill C(pd)01]

3. The title is appropriate and original.

2. The title is appropriate, but unimaginative (for example, "The Race," or "The Animals").

1. The title is not relevant to the story or is not included.

DESCRIBES CHARACTERS. [Skills C(s/d)01, C(s/d)03, C(c)06]

3. Both characters are included and their physical appearances are described.

2. Both characters are included, but the only descriptors included are the animals' names or types.

1. One or no character is included.

WRITES A STORY APPROPRIATE FOR THE PICTURE. [For example, the animals start the race; an event occurs that affects the animals or the race; a resolution concludes the race.] [Skill C(c)06]

3. The story line is interesting and appropriate for the picture, and the events are appropriately sequenced.

2. The story line lacks interest, but is appropriate, and most events are appropriately sequenced.

1. The story line is not appropriate and/or the events are sequenced so that the story is difficult or impossible to understand.

INCLUDES AN APPROPRIATE CONCLUSION. [Skill C(c)04, C(c)06]

3. A significant and interesting conclusion is included, and it fits the story line.

2. A conclusion is included, but it is not significant.

1. A conclusion is not included, or it is not appropriate.

SHOWS CREATIVITY/ORIGINALITY.

3. Color, style, and/or content distinguish the story from other students' stories.

2. The story is similar to other students' stories.

Comment: No skill numbers are listed for creativity/originality because this feature is not the result of any specific skills.

FORM: The form skills described below are important to written composition. Scoring guidelines for these skills are not precisely defined by numerical counts or values. Rather, they are dependent upon teacher judgment. Utilizing teacher judgment rather than exact numerical criteria expedites the handscoring process and gives accurate relative scores.

INDENTS FIRST WORD OF PARAGRAPH. [Skill C(p/d)03]

3. The first word is indented.

1. The first word is not indented.

CAPITALIZES FIRST WORD OF SENTENCES. [Sentences here include fragments that students perceive as sentences.] [Skill C(m)02]

3. All or most sentences have a capital letter for the first word.

2. Some sentences have a capital letter for the first word.

1. Many or all sentences do not have a capital letter for the first word.

INCLUDES PERIODS AT ENDS OF SENTENCES. [Sentences here include fragments that students perceive as sentences.] [Skill C(m)12]

3. All or most sentences end with periods or with other appropriate terminal punctuation.

2. Some sentences end with periods or with other appropriate punctuation.

1. Many or all sentences do not end with periods or other appropriate punctuation.

SPELLS CORRECTLY. [Skills C(sp)01, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 09, 11]

3. All or most words are spelled correctly.

2. Several words are misspelled.

1. Only a few words are spelled correctly.

Comment: Many misspellings of the same word should be evaluated as one misspelled word.

WRITES LEGIBLY. [Skill C(h)04]

3. All or most words are readable and have appropriate size, shape, spacing, and alignment.

2. Many words are readable, and unreadable words do not interfere with comprehension of content.

1. Many words are unreadable so that content is difficult or impossible to read.

Skills: C(i/p)06
C(i/p)17
C(i/p)10
C(s/d)04

Skill Statements: Writes, in appropriate form, a personal letter. . . .*
Writes paragraphs supporting a point of view.
Prepares reports on books, films, and television programs.
Writes a description, using specific words to describe emotions.

Grade: 6

Skill Description

The student writes a personal letter in which he/she persuades a friend to watch a specific television program. To do this, the student provides appeals either to reason or to the emotions.

The letter format includes the heading (the month, day, year in which the letter is written, and optionally the sender's address), the salutation (Dear and the name of the person to whom the letter is being sent), the closing (an expression such as Your friend, Best wishes, Love), and the signature (the sender's handwritten name). Knowledge of the technical terms for letter parts is not prerequisite to this skill.

The letter parts are placed correctly on the page: The heading is placed at the top right-hand corner of the letter; the salutation is located several lines below the heading and at the left-hand margin; the closing is located several lines under the body of the letter, in the lower right hand corner, aligned with the heading; the signature is located directly under the closing.

In supporting a point of view, the student states a viewpoint that can and will be supported by subsequent arguments, or "reasons." The statement of the point of view is a kind of topic sentence for a persuasive composition. Arguments may be appeals to reasons or appeals to emotions (the latter including appeals to authorities). At this grade level, arguments do not consist of a sequence of points that lead to each other in a chain of logic. Students may construct such arguments; however, these formal arguments are not required because they entail difficult reasoning and ordering skills.

To describe his/her feelings about the program, the student uses terms that convey emotions specifically. Emotions can be conveyed by words from all form classes.

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*The rest of this task ("and includes the address and return address on the envelope") is not included in the writing sample.

A number of other specific skills must be employed to compose a quality writing sample; these skills are referenced in the scoring guide.

Assessment

Sample Item

Write a letter to a friend. The purpose of the letter is to convince your friend to watch your favorite television program.

- Tell your friend that you think he or she should watch the program.
- Give the name of the program.
- Tell how the program makes you feel when you watch it. Use exact words that describe your feelings.
- Give two more good reasons why your friend should watch the program.
- Include all parts of a personal letter and put each of them in the right place on the page.
- Use good grammar and language.
- Write complete sentences.

Item Description

Using (1) format skills of personal-letter writing, (2) persuasive-writing skills, (3) descriptive-writing skills for conveying emotion, and (4) expository-writing skills to convey information (as appeals to reason) in precise language, the student writes a personal letter. The hypothetical audience for the letter is a personal friend. In the letter, the student convinces the friend that he/she should watch a favorite television program.

The series of instructions on including specific features helps ensure the production of these features and facilitates the construction of an appropriate scoring key that evaluates these features. The instructions concerning good grammar, language, and complete statements are included so that the audience type (a friend) does not influence the student to use less formal language than is desired on a competency test.

Scoring Key

The skills array of the key's matrix consists of the features of good writing that are effected when students employ the content, format, and form skills appropriate at this grade level for this writing task. The skills corresponding to each criterion are listed by continuum number on the subsequent scoring guide. Performance ratings of 3 (good), 2 (acceptable), 1 (unacceptable) are given on each criterion in accordance with the rating considerations that the scoring guide describes. Thus the scoring key can be used to elicit diagnostic information about individual component skills. It can also be used to determine a total writing score by summing the scores.

Scoring Criteria	3	2	1
CONTENT:			
States a point of view.	___	___	___
Describes feelings in specific words.	___	___	___
Includes reasons to support opinions.	___	___	___
Includes content conventions appropriate for a personal letter.	___	___	___
Shows creativity/originality.	___	___	

Comment: No space is provided for evaluating creativity/originality as "1" because this rating would unfairly assess beyond learned skills. However, this criterion is included to "reward" imagination.

Scoring Criteria	3	2	1
FORMAT:			
Includes all parts of a personal letter.	___	___	___
Places letter parts correctly on the page.	___	___	___
FORM:			
Uses complete sentences.	___	___	___
Uses correct grammar.	___	___	___
Capitalizes and punctuates correctly.	___	___	___
Spells correctly.	___	___	___
Writes legibly and indents paragraphs.	___	___	___

Scoring Guide

The scoring guide describes the guidelines for determining what constitutes a 3, 2, or 1 score on each criterion in the scoring key.

CONTENT: Students are to write a letter to a friend to convince that friend to watch their favorite television program. They are to state their opinion of the named program, describe how the program makes them feel, and give two more reasons why the friend should watch it.

STATES A POINT OF VIEW. [Skill C(i/p)17]

3. A point of view is stated. (For example, the student says he/she thinks the friend should watch a specific television program.)

2. A statement of fact is given. [For example, the student says he/she watches a specific television program.)

1. Neither point of view nor statement of fact is included.

DESCRIBES FEELINGS IN SPECIFIC WORDS. [For example, specific words like "happy" rather than general words like "good" are used to describe feelings.] [Skill C(s/d)04]

3. Feelings are described in specific terms.

2. Feelings are described in general terms.

1. Feelings are not described.

INCLUDES REASONS TO SUPPORT OPINION [that friend should watch program]. [Skills C(i/p)10, 17]

3. Two or more reasons are included.

2. One reason is included.

1. No reasons are included.

INCLUDES CONTENT CONVENTIONS APPROPRIATE FOR A PERSONAL LETTER. [For example, begins and ends with audience amenities such as saying "I hope to hear from you soon" so that the composition reads like a letter rather than like an essay; uses the pronouns I/me and you.] [Skill C(i/p)06]

3. The content suggests a personal letter.

2. Only part of the content suggests a personal letter.

1. The content does not suggest a letter at all.

SHOWS CREATIVITY/ORIGINALITY.

3. Color, style, content distinguish the letter from other students' letters.

2. The letter is similar to other students' letters.

Comment: No skill numbers are listed for creativity/originality because this feature is not the result of any specific skills.

FORMAT: Students are to use the correct format for writing a personal letter.

INCLUDES ALL PARTS OF A PERSONAL LETTER [date, greeting, body, complimentary closing, signature; the sender's address may also be included above the date; for scoring this criterion, proper placement is ignored--see the criterion immediately below]. [Skill C(i/p)06]

3. All or nearly all parts of the personal-letter format are included.

2. Some parts of the personal-letter format are included.

1. Few or no parts of the personal-letter format are included.

PLACES LETTER PARTS CORRECTLY ON THE PAGE [see parts above]. [Skill C(i/p)06]

3. All or nearly all letter parts are correctly placed.

2. Some letter parts are correctly placed.

1. Few or no letter parts are correctly placed. [This criterion is also scored if no parts are included.]

FORM: The form skills described below are important to the writing product. Scoring guidelines for these skills are not precisely defined by numerical counts or values. Rather, they are dependent upon teacher judgment. Utilizing teacher judgment rather than exact numerical criteria expedites the handscoring process and gives accurate relative scores.

USES COMPLETE SENTENCES. [Skills C(s)03, 09]

3. All or most sentences are complete.

2. Some sentences are complete.

1. Most sentences are fragments and/or run-ons.

USES CORRECT GRAMMAR [for example, subject-verb agreement, pronoun form]. [Skills C(w)02, 03, 04, 05, 11, 12; Skill C(s)05]

3. The letter has few or no grammatical errors.

2. The letter has some errors in grammar.

1. The letter has many errors in grammar.

CAPITALIZES AND PUNCTUATES CORRECTLY. [Skills C(m)01, 02, 03, 04, 08, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19]

3. The letter has few or no errors in capitalization and punctuation.

2. The letter has some errors in capitalization and punctuation.

1. The letter has many errors in capitalization and punctuation.

SPELLS CORRECTLY. [Skills C(sp)01, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 11, 12, 18, 21, 27]

3. Most or all words are correctly spelled.

2. Several words are misspelled.

1. Many words are misspelled.

Comment: Many misspellings of the same word should be evaluated as one misspelled word.

WRITES LEGIBLY AND INDENTS PARAGRAPHS [cursive writing, with appropriate size, shape, slant, spacing, alignment; paragraph indentation]. [Skills C(h)06, C(pd)03]

3. The letter has few or no exceptions to the criterion.

2. The letter has some exceptions to the criterion.

1. The letter has many exceptions to the criterion.

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WRITTEN COMPOSITION RESULTS ON THE 1980 SURVEY OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Joseph Lawlor, Bruce Cronnell, Larry Gentry, Ann Humes

ABSTRACT

This report presents and discusses the results for the Composition section of the Survey of Essential Skills, an assessment instrument developed by SWRL and administered to students in grades 1-6 of the Los Angeles Unified School District in the spring of 1980. Results are reported in eight categories: Word Processing, Sentence Processing, Paragraph Development, Organizational Skills, Dictionary/Reference Sources, Spelling, Mechanics in Writing, and Writing Samples.

Table 1

Number of Students for Composition

Grade 1	29,662
Grade 2	31,959
Grade 3	34,789
Grade 4	37,031
Grade 5	36,663
Grade 6	37,158
Total	207,262

students taking part in the Composition survey at each grade level. (Smaller number of students took part in the Writing-Sample section: numbers are reported in that section of this paper.)

This paper reports and discusses results in each of the reporting categories used in the 1980 SES:

Page

Word Processing 3

Sentence Processing 8

Paragraph Development 19

Organizational Skills 26

Dictionary/Reference Sources 32

Spelling 38

Mechanics in Writing 47

Writing Samples 58

Results are reported by grade level, along with discussion of individual skills and items. However, since scores for individual skills are often based on only one or two items, they should be interpreted with caution.*

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*A similar survey was also administered in 1979 (reported in Cronnell & Humes, 1980). However, the surveys for the two years differ considerably in Composition content and grade-level placement.

WRITTEN COMPOSITION RESULTS ON THE 1980 SURVEY OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Joseph Lawlor, Bruce Cronnell, Larry Gentry, Ann Humes*

The Survey of Essential Skills (SES) in Reading, Mathematics, and Composition was administered to students in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in the spring of 1980. The SES is an assessment instrument developed by SWRL Educational Research and Development in cooperation with LAUSD staff for the purpose of surveying skill proficiency in reading, mathematics, and composition in grades 1-6. Results of the SES are used by the District as a key element for implementing School Board policy that each child must attain proficiency in designated essential skills before advancing from one grade to the next.

The Composition skills included in the SES were selected from the LAUSD Skills Continuum (LAUSD, 1979) by District curriculum specialists and by SWRL staff. The survey items developed by SWRL correspond to the type of content that students encounter in their language arts and spelling textbooks. (See Cronnell, Lawlor, Gentry, Humes, & Maltbie, 1980, for detailed item specifications.)

The SES was administered to elementary school children in the District in the spring of 1980. Table 1 lists the number of

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*Authorship of this report is generally based on authorship of the corresponding sections of the Survey of Essential Skills. Lawlor: Sentence Processing, Paragraph Development, Mechanics in Writing. Cronnell: Introduction, Organizational Skills, Dictionary/Reference Sources. Gentry: Word Processing, Spelling. Humes: Writing Samples.

WORD PROCESSING

Word Processing, a category that deals largely with students' ability to select and use the appropriate parts of speech, was assessed at grades 2, 3, 4, and 5. With the exception of fifth grade, scores were generally high across grade levels; see Table 2.

Grade 2

Second graders, with an overall average score of 96%, had no difficulty in selecting and using adjectives (Skill (w)04) and prepositions (Skill (w)12), the only Word Processing skills assessed at this level. The assessment for adjectives consisted of three items; students had to choose the appropriate descriptive word to complete a sentence (e.g., The (big) dog is black"). Students scored well over 90% on each of the three. Scores on the preposition items were equally high. The sentence completion format was again employed, with students choosing the most appropriate preposition (e.g., "The cat is (on) the bed") for three items.

Grade 3

Students in grade 3 did very well on items that required them to select and use nouns (Skill (w)02) and pronouns (Skill (w)02), but displayed some difficulty in selecting and using verbs appropriately (Skill (w)03). The two noun items required students to select either the singular or plural form of a noun to complete a sentence (e.g., "We have ten (toys) "); the composite score for these items was 93%. Third graders also scored over 90% on three items that required the insertion of appropriate pronouns (e.g.,

Table 2

WORD PROCESSING RESULTS

			% Correct	
Grade 2				96
Skill (w)04	Selects and uses adjectives appropriately.		95	
	Items: 1. big dog	95		
	2. fire is hot	97		
	3. girl is first	94		
Skill (w)12	Selects and uses prepositions appropriately.		96	
	Items: 4. on	96		
	5. in	97		
	6. under	95		
Grade 3				94
Skill (w)02	Selects and uses nouns appropriately. singular/plural		93	
	Items: 1. ten toys	94		
	2. a glass	92		
	Selects and uses pronouns appropriately.		91	
	Items: 3. us (singular/plural)	90		
	4. they (singular/plural)	92		
	5. she (gender)	91		
Skill (w)03	Selects and uses verbs appropriately. regular/irregular		70	
	Items: 6. took	82		
	7. grew	74		
	8. sent	55		

Table 2 (continued)

			% Correct		
Grade 4					87
Skill (w)02	Selects and uses nouns and pronouns appropriately. pronouns only: nominative/objective			93	
	Items:	1. they	94		
		2. us	92		
Skill (w)05	Selects and uses adverbs appropriately.			87	
	Items:	3. slowly	87		
		4. faster	87		
Skill (w)06	Constructs contractions from paired words and writes paired words from contractions.			85	
	Items:	5. she is = she's	83		
		6. we have = we've	76		
		7. isn't = is not	93		
		8. you'll = you will	86		
Grade 5					67
Skill (w)03	Selects and uses verbs appropriately. past/past participle			53	
	Items:	1. drank	69		
		2. eaten	43		
		3. spoken	47		
Skill (w)09	Identifies and uses homonyms, synonyms and antonyms appropriately.			80	
	Items:	4. their (homophone)	63		
		5. cows eat/graze (synonym)	84		
		6. not happy/sad (antonym)	94		

"(They) were playing together"). They did as well choosing between singular and plural pronouns as choosing between male and female pronouns. When asked to distinguish between the regular and irregular past-tense forms of verbs (e.g., "Linda (took) her rabbit to school," where distractors were taked and tooked), students did reasonably well on two of the three items, scoring 82% and 74%. A third item, however, proved to be very difficult. When asked to choose the appropriate verb form for the sentence, "Last week, I (sent) a letter to my friend," only 55% were able to choose the correct response. A possible problem with this item was the inclusion of the distractor send, which required students to distinguish past/present as well as irregular/regular past.

Grade 4

Fourth graders, with a composite score of 87%, did well on all skills. When asked to choose between the nominative and objective forms of pronouns (Skill (w)02), they scored an excellent 93%. They scored slightly lower on items that required them to select and use adverbs (Skill (w)05). Scores for the adverb skill (e.g., "The man walked (slowly) up the street") averaged 87%. For Skill (w)06, an assessment of the ability to use contractions (i.e., choosing the correct full form for a contraction or the correct contraction for a given full form), fourth graders scored a respectable 85%. Word Processing skills at this grade level seem well intact.

Grade 5

Results at the fifth-grade level were not so encouraging as those at lower levels. Students in grade 5 attained a composite score of only 67%, probably because half of their overall score was based on the ability to discriminate between the past tense and the past participle of verbs (Skill (w)03). Three items were employed in assessing this skill, with students selecting the proper form of a verb in a sentence completion task (e.g., "Henry (drank) his milk"). Scores for two of the three items (eaten and spoken) were below 50%. Only 63% of the fifth graders were able to use the homophone their correctly, but they had little difficulty in using synonyms (84%) or antonyms (94%), all of which were assessed as Skill (w)09.

SENTENCE PROCESSING

Sentence Processing skills were assessed at every grade level. Those skills surveyed on the 1980 SES are listed in Table 3.

Grade 1

First-grade students performed very well on Sentence Processing items. In five items, students were given a picture and asked to identify the sentence that described the picture (Skill (s)01). Two answer choices were provided, the distractor being a "scrambled" version of the word order of the correct response; e.g.:

Directions: Look at the picture. Which group of words is a good sentence that tells about the picture?

picture: boy building a model airplane

A. Makes a toy he.
B. He makes a toy.

The average score for these five items was 93%, with individual items ranging from 91 to 95%.

Three additional items measured the students' ability to identify a simple sentence (Skill (s)02). Students were given two groups of words, each one capitalized and punctuated as a sentence. When students were asked to identify the group of words that was actually a sentence, 93% responded correctly. An example of this item type is presented below:

Directions: Which group of words makes a good sentence?

A. The car is blue.
B. Airplane fast little.

Table 3

SENTENCE PROCESSING RESULTS

		% Correct		
Grade 1				93
Skill (s)01	Demonstrates understanding of word order in a sentence.		93	
	Items: 1. The cars go.	91		
	2. He makes a toy.	93		
	3. The ball is big.	92		
	4. Mother is in the car.	95		
	5. He runs to the house.	95		
Skill (s)02	Identifies or copies a simple sentence, title, or caption. identification of simple sentences only		93	
	Items: 6. The car is blue.	93		
	7. You can jump.	93		
	8. I like to play.	94		
Grade 2				88
Skill (s)06	Expands simple sentence through the use of modifiers.		85	
	Items: 7. He gave me a pretty flower.	90		
	8. The little girl ran fast.	81		
Skill (s)07	Manipulates sentences through use of transformation. declarative interrogative		91	
	Items: 9. be inversion	88		
	10. auxiliary inversion	93		

Table 3 (continued)

		% Correct		
Grade 3				77
Skill (w)05	Constructs and identifies sentences in which the subject and verb agree. subject and verb adjacent		77	
	Items: 9. does	84		
	10. grow	71		
	11. listen	66		
	12. is	88		
Grade 4				83
Skill (s)04	Identifies and writes declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative sentences. identification only		86	
	Items: 9. interrogative	85		
	10. imperative	86		
Skill (s)07	Manipulates sentences through use of transformation.		76	
	Items: 11. interrogative declarative: do support	72		
	12. declarative interrogative: do support	79		
	13. declarative interrogative: do support	77		
Skill (s)10	Demonstrates the ability to substitute parts of speech (e.g., pronoun for noun).		88	
	Items: 14. she for Susan	90		
	15. them for the boys and girls	91		
	16. it for the book	82		

Table 3 (continued)

			% Correct		
Grade 5					71
Skill (s)08	Identifies parts of sentences (e.g., subject/predicate).			58	
	Items:	7. one-word subject	52		
		8. predicate phrase	63		
Skill (s)09	Combines simple sentences to form compound and complex sentences. compound sentences only			84	
	Items:	9. and	79		
		10. but	89		
Grade 6					64
Skill (s)08	Identifies parts of sentences (e.g., subject/predicate).			46	
	Items:	1. subject phrase	56		
		2. prepositional phrase	35		
Skill (s)11	Identifies and uses relative clauses that begin with who, which, that. combining sentences			83	
	Items:	3. who clause modifying subject	87		
		4. that clause modifying direct object	78		

Grade 2

Second graders did not perform quite so well as first graders did on Sentence Processing items, but their scores were still good (88% average). In two items, students were required to select the correct position for an adjective in a sentence (Skill (s)06); e.g.:

> Directions: Read the sentence. Where does the word pretty go in the sentence?
>
> He ↑ gave me ↑ a ↑ flower. pretty
>
> ○ ○ ○

Ninety percent of the students responded correctly to this item. On a similar item in which the adjective was to be inserted before the subject of a sentence, students had more difficulty (81%). Unfamiliarity with the item format may have contributed to some of the students' difficulties.

In two other Sentence Processing items, second graders were asked to transform a declarative sentence into a question (Skill (s)07). The transformation involved inversion of the main verb be or of an auxiliary verb; e.g.:

> Directions: Read the sentence. The sentence must be changed into a question. Which question is right?
>
> The kitten is lost.
>
> A. The kitten lost is?
> B. Is the kitten lost?
> C. Is lost the kitten?

Students found the be inversion slightly more difficult (88%) than the auxiliary inversion (93%).

Grade 3

One Sentence Processing skill was assessed at third grade. In four items, students were required to select a verb form that would agree with the subject of a sentence in person and number (Skill (s)05). The subject and verb were adjacent; e.g.:

> Directions: Think about how you write in school.
> Which word should you use when you write
> in school?
>
> That girl ______ not like candy.
>
> A. does
> B. do

The average score for all four of these items was only 77%. However, students had much more difficulty with the regular form *grow* and *listen* (71%, 66%) than they did with the irregular form *does* and *is* (84%, 88%). These results may reflect typical textbook emphasis on *do* and *be* in subject-verb agreement exercises. In addition, since many dialects lack the -*s* suffix and since the suffix is stressed in instruction, students may be attracted to the -*s* forms, believing them to be what is required in school writing.

Grade 4

Fourth graders scored higher than third graders did in Sentence Processing. The average score for eight Sentence Processing items was 83%. Two items required students to identify an interrogative sentence and an imperative sentence, respectively (Skill (s)04). About 85% of the students responded correctly. Although these results are good, they are somewhat disappointing because the sentences used in the items included terminal punctuation, which should have made the correct response obvious for the item below:

Directions: Which sentence is a question?

A. Call a doctor!
B. The doctor is here.
C. Who is your doctor?

Approximately 15% of the fourth graders could not identify the question, even though it was clearly punctuated with a question mark.

Three items on the fourth-grade survey measured students' ability to transform declarative and interrogative sentences (Skill (s)07). Unlike the third-grade items, though, these transformations required the use of the auxiliary verb do; e.g.:

Directions: This telling sentence can be made into a question. Which question is right?

She likes to play basketball.

A. Likes she to play basketball?
B. Does she like to play basketball?
C. Do she likes to play basketball?

Two of these items required transforming a statement into a question (78%). An additional item required a transformation from interrogative to declarative. Students found this item to be more difficult than the other two (72%).

Most students (88%) were successful in completing three Sentence Processing items that required substituting a pronoun for a noun phrase in a sentence (Skill (s)10); e.g.:

Directions: Which word can take the place of the underlined word?

Susan studied very hard before Susan went to bed.

- A. she
- B. it
- C. he
- D. they

The average score for these three items was 88%. However, one item that required substitution of the pronoun it for the noun phrase the book was considerably more difficult (82%) than the other two items (90%, 91%).

Grade 5

Fifth-grade students did not score well on the four Sentence Processing items (71% average). However, most of the difficulty occurred with two items that required knowledge of grammatical terms (Skill (s)08); e.g.:

Directions: Which part of the sentence is the subject?

Gloria likes to study.
A B

Only 52% of the fifth graders were able to answer this item correctly, even though there were only two answer choices given. (Thus a score of 50% could have been predicted solely on the basis of chance.) The results suggest that students were not at all familiar with the term subject. Moreover, students also scored poorly on a similar item that required identifying the predicate of a sentence (63%). These scores are particularly discouraging because textbooks devote a great deal of instruction to grammar study. However, knowledge of grammatical terms has been shown to be of little use in learning how to write (e.g., Elley, Barham, Lamb, & Wyllie, 1976). Thus the students' poor performance on these items may be less alarming than it would seem at first glance.

Fifth graders performed much better on two Sentence Processing items that required combining two simple sentences to form a compound sentence (Skill (s)09). In one item the sentences were to be joined with the conjunction and, and the other item required the use of but; i.e.:

> Directions: Which is the best way to put the two sentences together?
>
> 1. The air was cold. The snow was deep.
>
>   A. The air was cold, the snow was deep.
>   B. The air was cold, or the snow was deep.
>   C. The air was cold, and the snow was deep.
>
> 2. Juan was happy. Susan was sad.
>
>   A. Juan was happy, but Susan was sad.
>   B. Juan was happy, then Susan was sad.
>   C. Juan was happy, or Susan was sad.

Seventy-nine percent of the students answered the first item correctly, and 89% responded correctly to the second item. Item 2 may have been easier for students because of the obvious contrast between happy and sad--a contrast that would seem to make it easier to select the response containing but. Nevertheless, students scored much better on these items than they did on the items requiring identification of sentence parts.

Grade 6

Sixth-grade scores for Sentence Processing were even lower than those for grade five. The average score for four Sentence Processing items was only 64%. However, the major problem again was with two items that required knowledge of grammatical terms (Skill (s)08). In one item, students were asked to identify a subject noun phrase among three possible choices; only 56% of the students were able to do so. A second item required identifying a prepositional phrase among four choices; i.e.:

> Directions: Which part of the sentence is a prepositional phrase?
>
> Andy and I are making some cookies for the party.
>
> A B C D

Only 35% of the sixth graders answered this item correctly, despite the fact that textbook instruction normally covers prepositional phrases by this grade level. The poor scores on these two items (and on the two similar items in grade 5) indicate that students are not familiar with grammatical terminology.*

Two other sixth-grade Sentence Processing items measured students' ability to use relative clauses (Skill (s)11); e.g.:

> Directions: Which is the best way to put these sentences together?

---

*This unfamiliarity with grammatical terminology probably does not affect writing ability since research has shown that formal grammar study does not contribute to the development of composition skills (cf. Mellon, 1969, chapter 1).

The woman won the race. The woman was very happy.

A. The woman, she won the race, was very happy.
B. The woman who won the race was very happy.
C. The woman won the race was very happy.

Eighty-seven percent of the students answered this item correctly. The correct response to the second item contained a relative clause introduced by that, and students found this item to be more difficult (78%).

PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

Paragraph Development skills were assessed in grades 4, 5, and 6. Those skills surveyed on the 1980 SES are listed in Table 4.

Grade 4

Fourth graders had considerable difficulty with Paragraph Development items, averaging only 69% on four items. Most of the difficulty occurred in two items that required the student to select the appropriate chronological transitional word in a story (Skill (pd)06); e.g.:

> Directions: Which is the best word to use in the blank?
>
> Nick brushed the dirt off the old treasure chest. He turned the key and opened the lock. He waited for a few minutes. ______ he lifted the top.
>
> A. Sleepily
> B. Finally
> C. While
> D. Before

Only 52% of the fourth graders were able to select the correct response (Finally) in this item. In a similar item requiring the use of the transitional word then, scores were a little better (61%). Difficulties may have arisen from the considerable reading load required by the items. However, such difficulties may be unavoidable in assessing this skill because a minimum of four sentences is required to provide sufficient context for the transitional word. In each item, students were especially attracted to one distractor (i.e., Before in the example above) that, when

Table 4

PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

		% Correct		
Grade 4				69
Skill (pd)06	Uses/identifies transitional words and phrases to make paragraphs and sentences flow smoothly. chronological transitions		57	
	Items: 17. finally	52		
	18. then	61		
Skill (pd)07	Edits and proofreads paragraphs for final copy.		81	
	Items: 19. spelling	80		
	20. capitalization	82		
Grade 5				80
Skill (pd)06	Uses/identifies transitional words and phrases to make paragraphs and sentences flow smoothly. logical transitions		86	
	Items: 11. also	89		
	12. so	82		
Skill (pd)07	Edits and proofreads paragraphs for final copy.		77	
	Items: 13. spelling	81		
	14. spelling	77		
	15. capitalization	84		
	16. punctuation	67		

Table 4 (continued)

			% Correct		
Grade 6					60
Skill (pd)04	Composes a paragraph describing a sequence of times or events.			74	
	Items:	5. arrange three sentences	73		
		6. arrange three sentences	67		
		7. choose sentence to come next in a story	81		
Skill (pd)09	Writes paragraphs showing conversation.			20	
	Item:	8. choose sentence where new paragraph should begin (new speaker)	20		

read as if it were simply a continuation of the previous sentence, is an appropriate choice.

Fourth graders, however, scored much better on two proofreading items (Skill (pd)07). In one item, students were asked to select a correctly spelled sentence (80%); in the other item, students were required to choose a correctly capitalized sentence (82%); e.g.:

> Directions: Which sentence is capitalized correctly?
>
> A. Once i wrote a letter to Julie.
> B. once I wrote a letter to Julie.
> C. Once I wrote a letter to Julie.

Grade 5

Unlike fourth graders, fifth-grade students performed very well on items assessing the use of transitional expressions (Skill (pd)06). At fifth grade, the items included logical transitions in short expository paragraphs; e.g.:

> Directions: Which is the best word to use in the blank?
>
> Football is one kind of game to play. Baseball is another kind of game you can play. Many people ______ like to play basketball.
>
> A. yet
> B. also
> C. below
> D. soon

Eighty-nine percent of the students answered this item correctly, and 82% responded correctly to a similar item requiring the use of so.

The fifth-grade survey also included four proofreading items similar to those used in the fourth-grade assessment (Skill (pd)07).

However, the fifth-grade survey included two spelling items, one capitalization item, and one punctuation item; e.g.:

Directions: Which sentence is punctuated correctly?

A. I like bacon, eggs, and toast.
B. I like bacon, eggs, and, toast.
C. I like bacon eggs, and toast.

Of the four items, the punctuation item was the most difficult (67%). The scores for the two spelling items averaged 79%, and the capitalization item yielded a score of 84%. The item format may have contributed to difficulties with the punctuation item. Since the three sentences are so nearly identical, students may have had problems identifying the comma errors.

Grade 6

Sixth graders had a great deal of difficulty with Paragraph Development items. The average score for four items was only 60%. Three items measured students' ability to arrange a sequence of events in chronological order (Skill (pd)04). In two of these items, students were required to select the correct order for three sentences in a story; e.g.:

Directions: The sentences for this story are not in the right order. Read the title and the story. Then answer the question that follows the story.

THE VISITOR AT THE DOOR

I. As Sharon opened the door, the noise grew louder.

II. Sharon saw a little puppy standing by the door.

III. Sharon heard a noise outside the door.

What is the right order for these sentences?

A. III, II, I
B. I, III, II
C. III, I, II

Scores on these two items averaged 70%. The reading load required by the items may have contributed to the low scores.

In another item, also designed to assess chronological ordering, students were asked to select a sentence to complete an unfinished story; i.e.:

Directions: This story is not finished. Read the title and the story. Then answer the question that follows the story.

THE LANDING

The spaceship slowly settled on the surface of the planet. A door in the side of the ship slid open. A ladder was lowered to the ground.

Which sentence should come next in the story?

A. The spaceship turned out of its orbit and dived toward the planet.
B. A small figure stood in the doorway of the ship and peered out.
C. The ship's engines roared as it descended from the clouds.

Apparently, this item format was much easier for students; 81% responded correctly.

One sixth-grade item was designed to assess students' ability to paragraph conversation (Skill (pd)09); i.e.:

Directions: Read this story part. Where should a new paragraph begin?

> The bus returned to school in the afternoon. Ⓐ Linda and Ricardo got off and walked toward the classroom. Ⓑ "Did you enjoy the trip to the zoo?" Ricardo asked. Ⓒ Linda replied, "I sure did. Ⓓ My favorite part was the monkey house because some of those monkeys act just like people."

Only 20% of the students were able to answer this item correctly. Several factors may have contributed to these poor results. First, students may not have been familiar with the concept of beginning a new paragraph for each speaker in a conversation. Language arts textbooks normally provide little instruction in this skill, and reading texts commonly use other paragraphing conventions for dialogue. Second, the item format was probably confusing. Although steps were taken to minimize the reading load in this item, any selected-response assessment of this skill will necessarily be affected by students' reading abilities.

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

Two rather different kinds of Organizational Skills were assessed: classification (grades 2 and 4) and outlining (grades 5 and 6). Students performed very well on the former and very poorly on the latter; this result reflects the relative difficulty of the two kinds of skills. See Table 5.

Grade 2

Second-grade students classified items (pictures) and (printed) words (Skill (o)01). Students were asked "Which picture/word is a ______?" (e.g., a color) or "Which picture/word is something to ______?" (e.g., something to eat). Students had near-perfect scores (99%) for classifying items; their scores were also high (93%) for classifying words. These excellent results indicate that students have no difficulty with simple classifications, especially when distractor choices are not conceptually close to the correct answer (e.g., for milk--the answer for "something to drink"--the distractors were balloon and game).

Grade 4

Fourth-grade students classified words only (also Skill (o)01). Their scores (88%) were somewhat lower than those for second graders. This is probably because the distractors were conceptually closer to the correct answer (e.g., for branch--the answer for "part of a tree"--the distractors were grass and ground). Still, students performed well on this task.

Table 5

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS RESULTS

			% Correct	
Grade 2				96
Skill (o)01	Classifies items.		99	
	Items: 11. toy (ball)	99		
	12. animal (dog)	99		
	13. something to eat (pie)	99		
	Classifies words.		93	
	Items: 14: color (green)	96		
	15. something to wear (coat)	89		
	16. something to drink (milk)	95		
Grade 4				88
Skill (o)01	Classifies items and/or words. [words only]		88	
	Items: 21. part of the body (finger)	91		
	22. someone in family (brother)	92		
	23. part of a tree (branch)	88		
	24. noise (bark)	81		
Grade 5				58
Skill (o)03	Constructs an outline independently.		58	
	Items: 17. capitalization (Skill (m)09)	56		
	18. indentation	51		
	19. numbering and lettering	47		
	20. content organization	78		
Grade 6				58
Skill (o)04	Uses an outline to prepare a report.		58	
	items: 9. all information, but not in right order	38		
	10. not all information	66		
	11. matches exactly	65		
	12. all information, but not in right order	63		

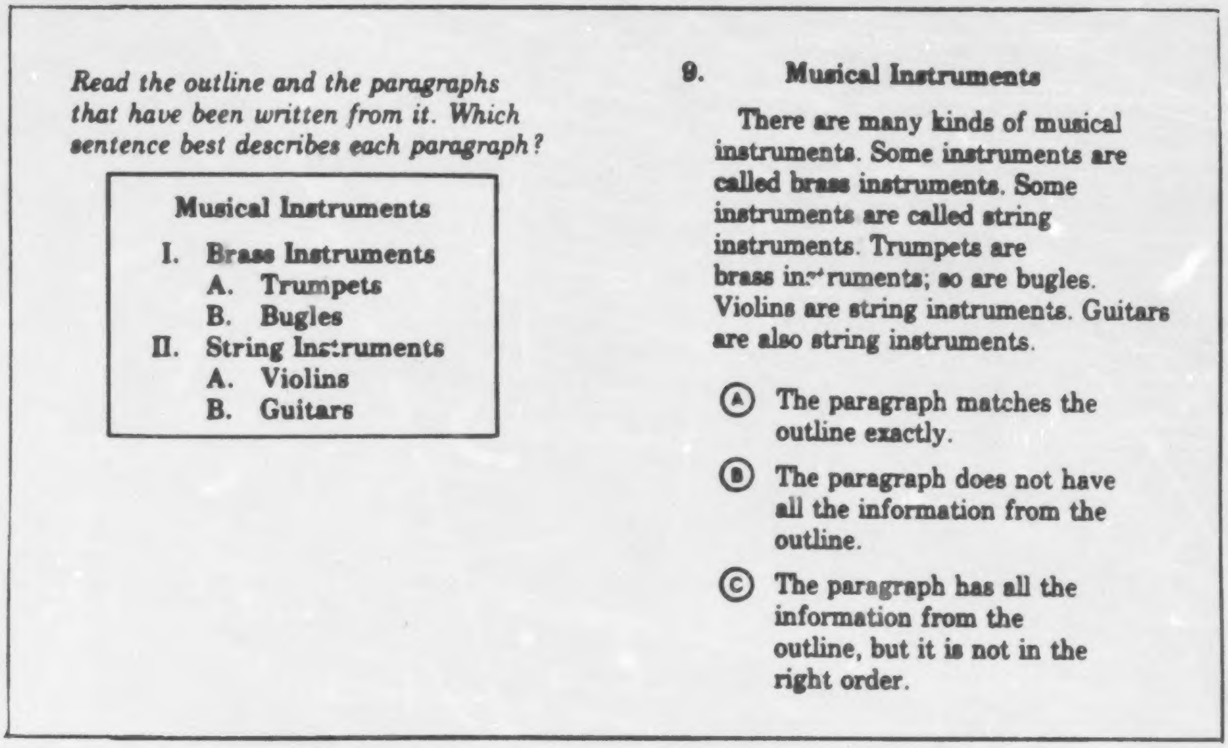
Grade 5

The fifth-grade skill was "Constructs an outline independently" (Skill (o)03). Students performed very poorly (58%). This is not surprising for at least three reasons. First, outlining appears to be a difficult skill at all levels. Second, textbook analysis (Humes, 1979b) suggests that this skill is better assessed at grade 6. Third, selected-response formats are less than ideal for this skill; a constructed-response format is possible (Humes, Cronnell, Lawlor, Gentry, & Fieker, 1980) and is probably more appropriate. However, such a format would require responses to be scored by teachers.

The grade 5 outlining skill was divided into four subskills. The first subskill assessed ability to capitalize the first word in a topic in an outline (Skill (m)09: Capitalizes each topic in an outline). The format was the same as that used for capitalization skills in the Mechanics section. Students had difficulty with this subskill (56%). The second subskill assessed ability to recognize a correctly indented outline; distractors illustrated indentation that was either completely inappropriate for any outline or inappropriate for the outline content used. Students had even more difficulty with this subskill (51%). They were very much attracted to the distractor with reverse indentation, i.e., with main topics indented and subtopics at the margin. The third subskill assessed ability to recognize an outline that was numbered and lettered correctly; distractors illustrated numbering and lettering that was completely inappropriate for any outline. Students had even greater difficulty with this subskill (47%). They were very much attracted to the distractor in which main topics were preceded by Roman numerals and subtopics were preceded by Arabic numerals. The fourth subskill assessed ability to recognize appropriate content to include in an outline; students had considerably less difficulty with this subskill (78%).

Grade 6

The sixth-grade skill was "Uses an outline to prepare a report" (Skill (o)04). Students performed very poorly on this skill (58%--the same score as in grade 5). Again this is not surprising because of the difficulty of the skill. Moreover, students may have had problems with the unfamiliar item format, which required considerable reading. (Again, a constructed-response format is possible Humes et al., 1980 and probably more appropriate, but requires teacher scoring.) The item format presented a brief outline and four paragraphs written from it; students had to choose one of three sentences to describe the paragraph. See Figure 1 for the outline and a sample item. Students performed moderately well on three items (numbers 10-12--average 64%), but very poorly on the other item (number 9--38%). The paragraph for the latter item (shown in Figure 1) had all the content, but with the sentence for the second main topic (II) moved to follow the sentence for the first main topic (I). The result is an acceptably arranged paragraph, although not in the arrangement stipulated by the outline. Students tended to identify the paragraph as matching



Read the outline and the paragraphs that have been written from it. Which sentence best describes each paragraph?

Musical Instruments

- **I. Brass Instruments**
  - **A. Trumpets**
  - **B. Bugles**
- **II. String Instruments**
  - **A. Violins**
  - **B. Guitars**

9. Musical Instruments

There are many kinds of musical instruments. Some instruments are called brass instruments. Some instruments are called string instruments. Trumpets are brass instruments; so are bugles. Violins are string instruments. Guitars are also string instruments.

Ⓐ **The paragraph matches the outline exactly.**

Ⓑ **The paragraph does not have all the information from the outline.**

Ⓒ **The paragraph has all the information from the outline, but it is not in the right order.**

Figure 1. Sample Item for Outlining (Grade 6)

exactly more frequently than they identified it as in the wrong order. The slight misordering may not have been as noticeable to students as the more obvious disordering in item number 12, where the sentences for main topic II and its subtopics A and B were ordered before all of the sentences for topic I.

Comments

The overall pattern of results for Organization Skills is mixed: Students did well on simple skills and poorly on difficult skills. The easier classification skills in grades 2 and 4 may not be critical to development of ability in written composition, and their high scores may present a somewhat distorted view of total student ability at these grade levels. The more difficult outlining skills in grades 5 and 6 also may not be critical to development of ability in written composition; in fact, many composition authorities oppose the teaching of outlining skills because (1) such skills are not generally used by most mature writers and (2) the use of outlines distorts the normal composing process. Since outlining represents the total Organizational Skills category in grades 5 and 6, student scores may be depressed because of assessment items that may not be critical to the development of ability to produce good written compositions.

DICTIONARY/REFERENCE SOURCES

The Dictionary/Reference Sources section focused primarily on alphabetization skills. (In the 1979 SPES, such skills were assessed in the Reading section; see Fiege-Kollmann, 1980.) At each grade level, scores were above 70% (see Table 6), indicating that most students satisfactorily attaining the skills.

Grade 1

First-grade students were first asked to identify letters of the alphabet in sequence (Skill (d/r)01). Each item presented three letters in consecutive order plus a blank at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end. Students chose which of three letters belonged in the blank. Performance was very good on this task (94%), with scores somewhat higher when the blank came at the end of the sequence than when it came at the beginning or in the middle.

The other first-grade skill was "Uses picture dictionary" (Skill (d/r)03). This skill was assessed by having students choose the letter that spelled the first sound in a picture word. Students performed very well with this task (96%). These scores are somewhat better than those on the analogous task in the Spelling section (87%). However, the distractors for Skill (d/r)03 were purposefully designed not to be either visually or aurally confusing, whereas the Spelling distractors were, since such confusions are common spelling problems. Although scores for this skill are quite good, it is not clear that the skill is really relevant to Dictionary/Reference Sources. That is, since most picture dictionaries are arranged by

Table 6

DICTIONARY/REFERENCE SOURCES RESULTS

				% Correct	
Grade 1					95
Skill (d/r)01	Identifies letters of the alphabet in sequence.			94	
	Items: 9.	A B C _	98		
	10.	E F G _	95		
	11.	U V _ X	91		
	12.	_ R S T	93		
Skill (d/r)03	Uses picture dictionary and primary encyclopedia. picture dictionary only			96	
	Items: 13.	fish	97		
	14.	house	94		
	15.	pencil	97		
	16.	turtle	95		
Grade 2					78
Skill (d/r)05	Alphabetizes letters.			89	
	Items: 17.	C D E	93		
	18.	K L M	89		
	19.	R S T	84		
	Alphabetizes words by the first letter.			68	
	Items: 20.	away big come	85		
	21.	help play want	64		
	22.	jump play ____ work	54		
Grade 3					74
Skill (d/r)06	Alphabetizes words by the second letter.			74	
	Items: 13.	cap clock corn cream	66		
	14.	bake begin blow break	81		
	15.	cage cent ____ circus	70		
	16.	pair ____ picture popcorn	77		

Table 6 (continued)

		% Correct		
Grade 4				71
Skill (d/r)07	Alphabetizes words by the third letter.		68	
	Items: 25. cabin cannon carpet cave	79		
	26. stage steal straw study	76		
	27. taste taught teeth ____	58		
	28. package palace ____ paste	61		
Skill (d/r)09	Identifies sections of a dictionary.		76	
	Items: 29. window - in the back	75		
	30. chocolate - in the front	78		
Grade 5				79
Skill (d/r)11	Uses guide words to locate an entry.		79	
	Items: 21. magic	82		
	22. matter	80		
	23. map	81		
	24. mail	73		
Grade 6				77
Skill (d/r)07	Alphabetizes words by the fourth letter.		84	
	Item: 13. discover disease dish distance	84		
	Alphabetizes words by the fourth and fifth letters.		69	
	Item: 14. spank spare spark sparrow	69		
Skill (d/r)15	Uses and interprets diacritical markings.		78	
	Items: 15. parade	87		
	16. bait	69		
Skill (d/r)20	Identifies and uses various reference sources in the library.		76	
	Items: 17. flags - encyclopedia	77		
	18. book about dogs - card catalog	75		

categories of words (e.g., colors, animals), the primary skills needed for picture-dictionary use are (1) picture identification and (2) classification. The former skill is really irrelevant to Written Composition, and the latter is covered by Organizational Skills (although not until grade 2).

Grade 2

In grade 2, more standard dictionary skills were assessed: alphabetizing letters and words (Skill (d/r)05). Students had little difficulty in recognizing which set of three consecutive letters was in alphabetical order (89%), although scores decreased as the letter sets were drawn from farther back in the alphabet. The other second-grade task was the alphabetization of words by the first letter. Students did not do so well with this skill (68%). They did much better recognizing a correctly alphabetized set of words when they began with consecutive letters at the beginning of the alphabet than when they began with non-consecutive letters later in the alphabet. (It is not clear whether consecutiveness or location in the alphabet is the problem; perhaps both.) One item required students to choose the word that would go in a specified position in an alphabetized list. Although this task is closer to "real world" alphabetizing than is recognizing a correctly alphabetized list, it was more difficult. (This format difficulty was generally found in grades 3 and 4 as well.)

Grade 3

Third-grade students alphabetized words by the second letter (74%, Skill (d/r)06). Scores for the four items were spread over 15%, but no explanation for these differences is apparent.

Grade 4

Fourth-grade students alphabetized words by the third letter (68%, Skill (d/r)07). Students clearly did better when choosing the correctly alphabetized set of words (78%) than when choosing which word would fit in an alphabetized list (60%). Students also had to identify the section of a dictionary in which a word would be found--in the front, middle, or back (76%, Skill (d/r)09). Because "middle" is somewhat amorphous, words were either clearly at the front (chocolate--beginning with the third out of 26 letters) or at the back (window--beginning with the fourth letter from the end of the alphabet). Student errors on both items were generally the choice of "in the middle."

Grade 5

Fifth-grade students identified on which page a word would occur, based on guide words only (Skill (d/r)11). The guide words and the item words were the same up to the third letter (i.e., the alphabetizing skill was at the fourth-grade level). Students performed relatively well (79%). One item (number 24) had a score considerably lower than that scores for the other items; no explanation for this difference is apparent.

Grade 6

Several skills were assessed in sixth grade. Students alphabetized words by the fourth and fifth letter (76%, Skill (d/r)07), using only the format in which they selected the correctly alphabetized set of words. As might be expected, students did much better alphabetizing words by the fourth letter (84%) than by the fifth letter (69%). Another sixth-grade skill involved interpretation of dictionary pronunciation respellings of words (Skill (d/r)15). A word was given in dictionary pronunciation symbols and students chose which of four words that respelling represented. The two-syllable word parade (87%) was easier than the one-syllable word bait (69%). This result is not surprising since it is easier to find similarly spelled distractors for one-syllable words than for two-syllable words; therefore, the distractors for parade were probably perceived as more obviously wrong than those for bait. The final sixth-grade skill required identification of the appropriate library reference source to use when looking for specific information (Skill (d/r)20). Students did relatively well with items for this skill (76%), suggesting that they generally know what encyclopedias and card catalogs are used for and what atlases and dictionaries are not used for.

SPELLING

Results of the Spelling section indicate that, in general, students in grades 1, 2, and 3 do very well on basic spelling skills. In the upper elementary grades, where spelling processes and less common spellings are assessed, scores are considerably lower; see Table 7. This same trend was noted for the 1979 assessment (Cronnell & Humes, 1980).

Grade 1

Unlike the 1979 assessment in which first graders demonstrated their ability to discriminate rhyming words and consonant and vowel sounds by matching pictures, the 1980 assessment required students to select and use actual spellings (e.g., (r) ug). The composite score for the four skills assessed was 82%. Scores for three of the skills--initial consonants (Skill (sp)01), final consonants (Skill (sp)03), and rhyming words (Skill (sp)02) were well above 80% and indicate that most first graders in the District have little difficulty in learning these skills. The relatively complex task of discriminating and spelling medial short vowels (Skill (sp)04) proved to be somewhat more difficult, with students attaining an average score of 70%.

Grade 2

Second graders followed much the same pattern as their younger counterparts, attaining higher scores on consonant and rhyming tasks and lower scores in spelling vowel sounds. They did very well (88%) in spelling initial and final consonant clusters (Skill (sp)05), and

Table 7

SPELLING RESULTS

			% Correct	
Grade 1				82
Skill (sp)02	Identifies and spells rhyming words.		84	
	Items: 17. sun--run	84		
	18. pig--big	83		
	19. bed--red	84		
Skill (sp)01	Identifies and spells initial consonant sounds.		87	
	Items: 20. /r/-r (rug)	86		
	21. /d/-d (dog)	86		
	22. /n/-n (nut)	88		
Skill (sp)03	Identifies and spells final consonant sounds.		86	
	Items: 23. /p/-p (top)	82		
	24. /n/-n (pan)	87		
	25. /t/-t (hat)	88		
Skill (sp)04	Identifies and spells medial short vowel sounds.		70	
	Items: 26. /u/-u (bus)	70		
	27. /o/-o (mop)	72		
	28. /e/-e (ten)	69		
Grade 2				81
Skill (sp)02	Identifies and spells rhyming words.		82	
	Items: 23. nine--fine	86		
	24. tent--went	78		
Skill (sp)03	Identifies and spells final consonant sounds.		84	
	Items: 25. /ks/-x (box)	94		
	26. /s/-ss (glass)	74		

Table 7 (continued)

		% Correct		
Skill (sp)05	Identifies and spells initial/final consonant clusters.		88	
	Items: 27. st (stamp)	85		
	28. sp (spoon)	93		
	29. nd (hand)	87		
	30. sk (mask)	88		
Skill (sp)11	Identifies and spells long vowel/final e pattern.		62	
	Items: 31. /ō/-o...e (bone)	40		
	32. /ā/-a...e (cake)	84		
Grade 3				78
Skill (sp)06	Identifies and spells consonant digraphs.		82	
	Items: 17. /sh/-sh (sheep)	84		
	18. /ng/-ng (ring)	87		
	19. /hw/-wh (whale)	76		
Skill (sp)07	Identifies and spells vowel digraphs.		82	
	Items: 20. /ā/-ai (train)	74		
	21. /u̇/-oo (foot)	87		
	22. /ō/-ow (crow)	89		
	23. /ē/-ee (teeth)	78		
Skill (sp)08	Forms plurals by adding s and es.		78	
	Items: 24. es (dishes)	75		
	25. s (books)	80		
Skill (sp)09	Spells new words by adding s, ed, ing to base words.		70	
	Items: 26. ed (rained)	67		
	27. s (finds)	64		
	28. ing (watching)	80		

Table 7 (continued)

			% Correct		
Grade 4					64
Skill (sp)12)	Identifies and spells words containing diphthongs.			58	
	Items:	31. /ô/-aw* (hawk)	68		
		32. /ou/-ow (growl)	47		
Skill (sp)14	Identifies and spells words by adding prefixes.			79	
	Items:	33. a- (across)	84		
		34. un- (unusual)	74		
Skill (sp)27	Doubles final consonant before adding ed or ing.			55	
	Items:	35. shopping	56		
		36. slipped	53		
Grade 5					68
Skill (sp)03	Identifies and spells final consonant sounds.			63	
	Items:	25. /j/-ge (huge)	76		
		26. /s/-se (verse)	61		
		27. /z/-se (bruise)	53		
Skill (sp)07	Identifies and spells vowel digraphs.			68	
	Items:	28. /u/-ou (cousins)	61		
		29. /e/-ea (heavy)	77		
		30. /ē/-ie (thief)	67		
Skill (sp)10	Identifies and spells compound words.			74	
	Items:	31. cornfield	84		
		32. houseboat	63		

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*Listed as a diphthong in LAUSD continuum.

Table 7 (continued)

		% Correct		
Grade 6				66
Skill (sp)18	Identifies and spells words with r-controlled vowels.		73	
	Items: 19. /er/-ear (tear)	61		
	20. /er/-ear (learn)	84		
Skill (sp)19	Spells plurals by changing f to v and adding es.		67	
	Item: 21. shelves	67		
Skill (sp)20	Spells new words by changing y to i and adding es.		77	
	Item: 22. enemies	77		
Skill (sp)21	Drops final e prior to adding ing suffix.		60	
	Items: 23. hoping	48		
	24. arriving	72		
Skill (sp)22	Changes words to adjectives by adding -able or -ful.		63	
	Item: 25. valuable	63		
Skill (sp)23	Spells new words by adding noun-forming endings.		63	
	Items: 26. laziness	49		
	27. operation	77		
Skill (sp)24	Changes words to adverbs by adding -ly.		57	
	Item: 28. loosely	57		
Skill (sp)25	Forms irregular plurals by changing root words.		70	
	Item: 30. geese	70		
Skill (sp)26	Changes spelling/sound of words when adding certain suffixes.		68	
	Item: 29. angry	68		

scored a respectable 84% on the spellings of final consonants (i.e., box, glass--Skill (sp)03). On a skill requiring them to rhyme items containing long vowels and/or final consonant clusters (Skill (sp)02), second graders scored 82%. The composite spelling score for this grade (81%) was depressed by a low success rate on one of the two items in the long vowel/final e category (Skill (sp)11). While 84% were able to select the correct spelling for cake, only 40% spelled bone correctly. For this latter item, pupils were required to complete the stimulus "b____" (accompanied by a picture of a bone) by choosing either oan, on, or the correct answer--one. Approximately the same number of students chose oan as did one. This suggests that some students may have interpreted one as representing a word in itself (i.e., /wun/) and opted for the commonly taught oa digraph.

Grade 3

Students in grade 3 attained a composite score of 78%, scoring quite well on all items except those assessing inflectional suffixes (Skill (sp)09). For individual items assessing the spelling of consonant digraphs (Skill (sp)06) and vowel digraphs (Skill (sp)07), scores ranged from 74% to 89%. Third graders also did well in forming plurals by adding -s (80%) and -es (75%) (Skill (sp)08). These latter scores represent a significant improvement over 1979 scores for similar items. The most difficult skill for third-graders proved to be the addition of inflectional suffixes (Skill (sp)09). Although they had little difficulty with the -ing suffix (80%), an item that called for adding -ed to a base word (i.e., rained) elicited only 67% correct answers, and only 64% were able to select -s as the correct suffix for finds.

Grade 4

Fourth graders did not do well on the Spelling section, attaining the lowest composite score (64%) for any grade level. They did relatively well (79%) in adding prefixes (Skill (sp)14), but found the other assessed skills very difficult. Two items called for students to use vowel digraphs (Skill (sp)07); 68% were able to select aw as the correct digraph for hawk, but only 47% chose ow as the proper spelling for growl. Since students were asked to furnish the entire word ending (i.e., owl to complete the stimulus "gr____"), some students may have been reluctant to choose owl because this particular letter combination can stand alone as a whole word. Doubling final consonants (Skill (sp)27) was another difficult task for fourth graders. Two items were employed to assess this skill and the results were quite consistent; 56% made the correct transition from shop to shopping, and 53% derived slipped from slip.

Grade 5

The relatively low composite score (68%) at grade 5 is the result of highly diverse scores within individual skill categories. The assessment of final consonant spellings (Skill (sp)03), for example, was marked by a score of 76% for the /j/-ge spelling in huge, but a very low score of 53% for the /z/-se spelling in bruise.

Similarly, vowel digraph spellings (Skill (sp)07) ranged from 77% for /e/-ea (i.e., heavy) to 61% for /u/-ou (i.e., cousins). Such mixed results are probably best explained by the fact that spelling textbooks generally devote little attention to such spellings (see Gentry, 1979, 1980). Fifth graders did somewhat better on choosing the correct component words to complete compound words (Skill (sp)10), with an average score of 74% for the two items.

Grade 6

Most of the grade 6 assessment dealt with specific suffixes and suffixation processes. Most of the students as this level (77%) appear to have a good grasp of the rule requiring them to change y to i before adding -es, as in changing enemy to enemies (Skill (sp)20). They had a more difficult time spelling plurals by changing f to v and adding -es, as in making the transition from shelf to shelves (Skill (sp)19); only 67% were successful. Mixed results were obtained in items that required dropping the final e (Skill (sp)21). Two items were used to assess this skill; while 72% were able to employ the correct process to spell arriving when given the base word arrive, only 48% were able to derive hoping from hope. Scores for this latter item seem to have been influenced by the inclusion of the distractor hopping, a real word in itself. That many students are unsure about when the final e should be dropped and when it should be retained is shown by the large number who incorrectly dropped the _e_ in _loose_ before adding the suffix -_ly_ (Skill (sp)24); only 57% spelled _loosely_ correctly.

In spelling new words by adding noun-forming endings (e.g., changing _lazy_ to _laziness_--Skill (sp)23), the average score was 63%. The same score (63%) was attained on Skill (sp)22--changing words to adjectives by adding -_able_ or -_ful_ (e.g., _value-valuable_). Sixth graders did well in spelling words containing _r_-controlled vowels (e.g., _learn_--Skill (sp)18), averaging a respectable 73%. They did almost as well (70%) on Skill (sp)25 which involved the spelling of irregular plurals (e.g., _geese_). An item that required a change in the spelling of a base word when adding a suffix (i.e., changing _anger_ to _angry_--Skill (sp)26) elicited an average score of 68%.

MECHANICS IN WRITING

Mechanics in Writing skills (capitalization and punctuation) were assessed in grades 2-6. Those skills assessed on the 1980 SES are listed in Table 8.

Grade 2

Second-graders scored reasonably well in Mechanics, averaging 78% on six items. (This was the highest average score for all five of the grade levels in which Mechanics were assessed.) In two items, students were required to identify the pronoun *I* as the word to be capitalized in a sentence (Skill (m)03); e.g.:

Directions: Fill in the bubble under the letter that should be a capital.

Bill and i will play a game.*
↓ ↓ ↓
○ ○ ○

Eighty-one percent of the students answered this item correctly. The second item was somewhat more difficult (73%), possibly because the two distractors (*birthday* and *circus*) were more attractive to students (perhaps because they frequently appear in capitalized forms).

Two items required students to select a period as the terminal punctuation for a declarative sentence (Skill (m)12). Distractors were a comma and *none of these*. Approximately 80% of the students

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*Capitalization items generally followed this item format for all grade levels of the SES, except that, in grades 3-6, letters were substituted for the bubbles shown here. Consequently, only those capitalization items that differ from this format will be illustrated in subsequent grade-level discussions.

Table 8

MECHANICS IN WRITING RESULTS

		% Correct		
Grade 2				78
Skill (m)03	Capitalizes the personal pronoun I.		77	
	Items: 33.	81		
	34.	73		
Skill (m)12	Uses period to end sentence.		80	
	Items: 35.	84		
	38.	76		
Skill (m)13	Uses question mark to end sentence.		78	
	Items: 36. wh-word question	85		
	37. inverted-auxiliary question	70		
Grade 3				71
Skill (m)01	Capitalizes first letters in names of persons.		70	
	Items: 29. last name (Green)	65		
	31. first name (Jeff)	73		
	32. first name (Joe)	71		
	34. first name (Lucy)	70		
Skill (m)02	Capitalizes first letter in first word in sentence.		72	
	Items: 30.	73		
	33.	71		

Table 8 (continued)

		% Correct		
Grade 4				65
Skill (m)04	Capitalizes the first letter in names of days of the week, special days, months, streets, and cities.		61	
	Items: 37. day of the week (Saturday)	63		
	38. street name (Main Street)	59		
Skill (m)08	Capitalizes first word in greeting and closing of letters, invitations, and notes.		61	
	Items: 39. greeting	89		
	40. closing	35		
Skill (m)10	Capitalizes first word in a direct quotation.		51	
	Item: 41.	51		
Skill (m)15	Uses comma when writing the date.		86	
	Item: 42. May 2, 1980	86		
Skill (m)16	Uses comma between city and state.		62	
	Item: 43. Long Beach, California	62		
Skill (m)21	Uses apostrophe in singular and plural possessive forms. [singular only]		72	
	Item: 44. uncle's	72		
Grade 5				74
Skill (m)05	Capitalizes the first letters in titles, Mrs., Miss, Ms., Mr., and Dr.		87	
	Item: 33. Mrs. Hill; see (m)14	87		
Skill (m)06	Capitalizes the first letters in names of states and countries.		84	
	Items: 35. country (Canada)	83		
	36. state (Texas)	84		

Table 8 (continued)

			% Correct
Skill (m)07	Uses capital letters in abbreviations. [initials only]		79
	Item: 34. Cecilia T. Diaz; see (m)14	79	
Skill (m)11	Capitalizes the first, last, and important words in a title or bibliography.		67
	Item: 37. book title (The Dollar Dragon)	67	
Skill (m)14	Uses periods at end of abbreviations and initials.		83
	Items: 33. abbreviated title (Mrs. Hill); see (m)05	87	
	34. initial (Cecilia T. Diaz); see (m)07	79	
Skill (m)17	Uses comma to separate items in a series.		79
	Items: 41. lions, tigers, and elephants	79	
	43. books, magazines, and records	78	
Skill (m)19	Identifies and uses exclamation point appropriately.		73
	Items: 42.	73	
	44.	72	
Skill (m)20	Uses comma in quotation.		60
	Items: 38. initial speaker tag	72	
	39. final speaker tag	48	
Skill (m)22	Uses hyphen in hyphenated word and in break of word at end of line. [break at end of line only]		59
	Item: 40. prac-tice	59	

Table 8 (continued)

			% Correct		
Grade 6					55
Skill (m)18		Uses comma after direct address.		71	
Items:	31.	initial direct address	70		
	32.	medial direct address within quotation	71		
Skill (m)21		Uses apostrophe in singular and plural possessive forms.		51	
Items:	34.	irregular plural (children's)	53		
	35.	singular (cat's)	64		
	36.	regular plural (parrots')	36		
Skill (m)23		Uses the colon when writing dialogue or the greeting in a business letter and when introducing a series. [greeting only]		41	
Item:	33.		41		

correctly identified the period as the appropriate punctuation in these two items.

Two additional items measured the use of a question mark in interrogative sentences (Skill (m)13). Distractors for these items were a period and none of these. The stimulus in the first item was a wh-word question ("Where do you go to school?"); 85% of the students answered this item correctly. In the second item, the stimulus was an inverted-auxiliary question ("Can you find the ball?"). Only 70% of the students were able to answer this item correctly, apparently finding the inverted-auxiliary question more difficult to identify than the wh-word question. This result is the opposite of that found in the 1979 SPES (Cronnell & Humes, 1980).

Grade 3

Third-grade scores in Mechanics averaged 71% on six items. Students had some difficulty capitalizing names of persons (Skill (m)01). In three items, about 70% of the third-graders were able to identify a first name (e.g., Jeff) as the word to be capitalized in a sentence. One item required capitalizing a surname (i.e., Billy Green); only 65% of the students responded correctly to this item. Confusion may have resulted from the use of green as a surname. Textbooks often include instruction on the use of "color words," and thus students may be more accustomed to seeing such words in their lower-case form.

Two additional items included in the third-grade survey measured capitalization of the first word in a sentence (Skill (m)02). Slightly more than 70% of the students answered these items correctly. These results are somewhat disappointing since this skill is usually introduced and practiced very early in textbook instruction. Even so, more than one-quarter of the third-graders could not identify the first word of a sentence as requiring capitalization.

Grade 4

The average score for the eight fourth-grade Mechanics items was only 65%. Many students had difficulty capitalizing a day of the week and the name of a street (Skill (m)04). Scores on these two items were 63 and 59%, respectively.

In two items, students were asked to identify correctly capitalized letter parts (Skill (m)08); e.g.:

Directions: Which closing is correct for a letter?

A. your friend,
B. Your friend,
C. Your Friend,

Only 35% of the fourth-graders were able to identify choice B as the correct answer in this item. (Choice C was chosen more frequently.) Textbooks include a great deal of instruction on letter formats, but students did not seem to be aware that the first word (and only the first word) in the closing of a letter is capitalized. However, students scored much higher (69%) on a similar item containing the greeting of a letter.

One item measured capitalization of the first word in a dialogue quotation (Skill (m)10). Only 51% of the students responded correctly, despite the fact that textbook instruction usually covers this capitalization skill by fourth grade.

Three punctuation items were also included in the fourth-grade survey. Most students (86%) identified a comma as the appropriate punctuation mark in a date (Skill (m)15). However, fourth-graders were not as successful (62%) in using a comma between a city and state (Skill (m)16). The final punctuation item required students to identify the correct form of a singular possessive noun (Skill (m)21); i.e.:

Directions: Which word is correct?

Jenny has an uncle. Jenny likes to visit her _____ house.

A. uncle's
B. uncles
C. uncl'es

Seventy-two percent of the students responded correctly to this item.

Grade 5

Fifth-graders performed much better on Mechanics than did fourth-graders, averaging 74% on 14 items. Most students (87%) had no difficulty identifying a personal title that was correctly capitalized and punctuated (Skills (m)05 and (m)14); e.g.:

Directions: Which name is capitalized and punctuated correctly?

A. mrs. Hill
B. Mrs. Hill
C. Mrs Hill
D. mrs Hill

On a similar item containing an initial in a personal name (Skills (m)07 and (m)14), scores were somewhat lower (79%).

Two items required students to identify the name of a country and a state as the word needing capitalization in a sentence (Skill (m)06). Most students (84%) had no problems with these items.

One item measured capitalization of a word in a book title (Skill (m)11). Only 67% of the students answered the item correctly, even though most textbooks introduce this skill well before fifth grade.

Fifth-graders performed reasonably well (79%) on two items that required the use of a comma in a series (Skill (m)17). Scores were somewhat lower (74%) on two additional items assessing the use of an exclamation point (Skill (m)19).

Two items required identifying the correct placement of a comma in a dialogue quotation (Skill (m)20). In one item, the speaker tag preceded the quotation (i.e., Julie asked, "Do you want to play baseball?"). Seventy-two percent of the students responded correctly. However, in the second item, the speaker tag followed the quotation (i.e., "I finished my homework," Juan said.), and only 49% of the students selected the correct answer. This suggests that students may be more accustomed to using a speaker tag before a quotation in their own writing.

The final Mechanics item at this grade level measured students' ability to use a hyphen in the break of a word at the end of a line (Skill (m)22); e.g.:

Directions: Which sentence is punctuated correctly?

A. If you want to be on the
swimming team, you must prac
tice every day.

B. If you want to be on the
swimming team, you must pr-
actice every day.

C. If you want to be on the
swimming team, you must prac-
tice every day.

Students did not perform well on this item (59%), but this is not surprising, considering that most textbooks do not emphasize this skill; even though spelling texts provide considerable practice in syllabication, they do not generally teach its practical use--dividing words at ends of lines.

Grade 6

Sixth-grade scores for Mechanics were the lowest of all the grade levels tested--55%. Two items assessed the use of a comma after a noun of direct address (Skill (m)18). Approximately 70% of the students answered these items correctly.

Students had much more difficulty, however, with three items that measured the use of apostrophes in possessives (Skill (m)21). One item required students to select the correct form of an irregular plural possessive; e.g.:

Directions: Which word should go in the blank?

The ______ gifts are on the table.

A. childrens
B. children's
C. childrens'

Fifty-three percent of the students identified the correct form in this item. In a similar item, 64% of the students correctly identified a singular possessive form (cat's). The most difficult of the three items contained a regular plural possessive (parrots'): only 36% of the students answered this item correctly. (This percentage is only slightly higher than that which could have been predicted by chance alone.) Textbooks generally introduce instruction on apostrophes in fourth grade, with considerable review and practice in grades five and six. Nevertheless, sixth-graders still did not seem to understand the basic rules for using apostrophes in possessives.

Sixth-graders also scored poorly on one item assessing the use of a colon in the greeting of a business letter (Skill (m)23); e.g.:

> Directions: Which greeting is correct for a business letter?
>
> A. Dear Ms. Brown,
> B. Dear Ms. Brown
> C. Dear Ms. Brown.
> D. Dear Ms. Brown:

Only 41% of the students were able to answer this item correctly. Students found the greeting containing a comma to be an attractive distractor, even though the directions specifically refer to a business letter, not a personal letter. (Some textbooks used in the District permit either a colon or a comma to be used with business-letter greetings, although actual business practice permits only the former.)

WRITING SAMPLES

A writing-sample item was included in the SES for both sixth and third grades. This writing-sample stimulus was highly structured. Such structuring facilitates easy scoring according to criteria that pertain specifically to that stimulus. As an example, the stimulus for grade 3 is displayed in Figure 2; the corresponding scoring key for the grade 3 stimulus is displayed in Figure 3.

As illustrated in the scoring key in Figure 3, the skills array of the scoring matrix consisted of the features of good writing that the sample exhibits when a student employs the content and form skills that are appropriate for both the specific writing task and the grade level of the assessment. Performance ratings of 3/2/1 (good/acceptable/unacceptable) were given on each skill criterion.

A scoring guide accompanied both writing-sample items (see Figure 4); this guide described the features that constitute a good, acceptable, or unacceptable score on each criterion in the scoring key. For further information on the scoring method, see Humes (1980). See Humes (1979a) for a description of a pilot study of these writing samples, scoring keys, and scoring guides. See Cronnell (1980) for a study of writing samples collected from a number of schools participating in the 1980 SES.

For both grades 3 and 6, totals of the three categories (good/acceptable/unacceptable) for all criteria add up to more than 100% because every criterion does not have three possible ratings. Grade 3 had one criterion--"Indents first word of paragraph"--that could be scored only "good" or "unacceptable." Because there was no "acceptable" category, this dichotomy depressed total scores for grade 3. Grade 6 had one criterion--"Shows creativity and originality"--that could be scored only "good" or "acceptable." This dichotomy slightly elevated total scores because there was no "unacceptable" category.

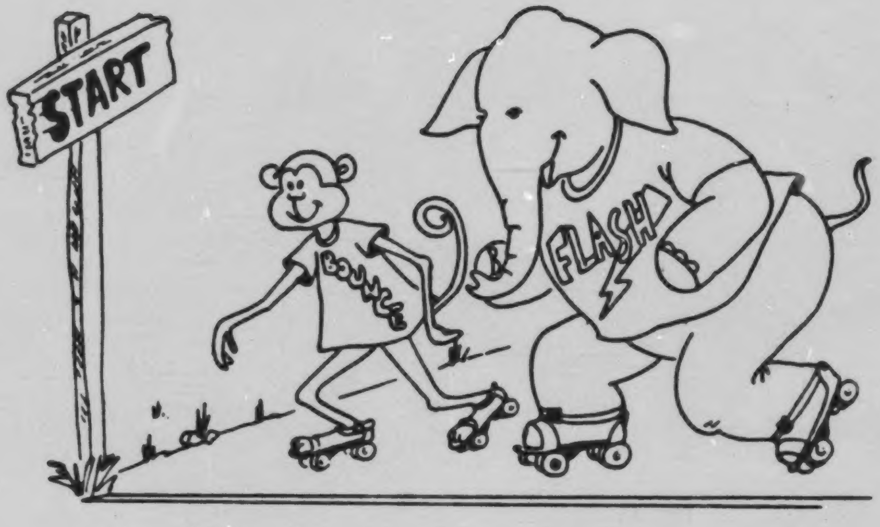
Sums of the "good" and "acceptable" categories of the writing samples in the 1980 SES produce overall scores that are higher than the total scores on the selected-response items. Table 9 compares the overall scores on the selected-response items with the scores on the writing samples. Scores on the writing-sample items are discussed in detail below by the grade level at which each writing-sample item was administered.

Table 9

Writing-Sample and Selected-Response Scores

	Writing Sample				Corresponding Selected-Response Items
	Percent Good	Percent Acceptable	Percent Unacceptable	"Good" and "Acceptable" Summed for Overall Score	
Grade 3	45	39	22	84%	78%
Grade 6	51	34	16	85%	64%

Writing Sample



Look at the picture of these animals. Both animals are wearing skates. The monkey's name is Bounce. The elephant's name is Flash. Write a story about the picture and the animals in it.

- Tell something about the way the animals look.
- Tell what they do together on their skates.
- Have something strange or funny happen to them.
- Write a good ending for your story.
- Give your story a title.

When you finish your story, give it to your teacher with this booklet.

Figure 2. Writing-Sample Stimulus for Grade 3.

35. Writes a title.	3	2	1
36. Describes characters.	3	2	1
37. Writes storyline appropriate for picture.	3	2	1
38. Includes appropriate conclusion.	3	2	1
39. Shows originality/creativity.	3	2	
40. Indents first word of paragraph.	3		1
41. Capitalizes first word of sentences.	3	2	1
42. Includes periods at ends of sentences.	3	2	1
43. Spells correctly.	3	2	1
44. Writes legibly.	3	2	1

Figure 3. Example of Writing-Sample Scoring Key (Grade 3).

Writing Sample

Described below are guidelines for determining what constitutes a score of 3, 2, or 1 on each criterion in the scoring key.

CONTENT: Students are to describe the pictured animals and write a story about the picture. They are to include a strange or funny event, write a "good ending," and give the story a title.

35. WRITES A TITLE.

3. The title is appropriate and original.

2. The title is appropriate, but unimaginative (for example, "The Race," or "The Animals").

1. The title is not relevant to the story or is not included.

36. DESCRIBES CHARACTERS.

3. Both characters are included and their physical appearances are described.

2. Both characters are included, but the only descriptors included are the animals' names or types.

1. One or no characters are included.

37. WRITES A STORY LINE THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE PICTURE [for example, the animals start the race, an event occurs that affects the animals or the race, a resolution concludes the race].

3. The story line is interesting and appropriate for the picture, and the events are appropriately sequenced.

2. The story line lacks interest, but is appropriate, and most events are appropriately sequenced.

1. The story line is not appropriate, and/or the events are sequenced so that the story is difficult or impossible to understand.

38. INCLUDES AN APPROPRIATE CONCLUSION.

3. A significant and interesting conclusion is included, and it fits the story line.

2. A conclusion is included, but it is not significant.

1. A conclusion is not included or it is not appropriate.

39. SHOWS CREATIVITY AND ORIGINALITY

3. Color, style, and/or content distinguish the story from other students' stories.

2. The story is similar to other students' stories.

FORM: The form skills described below are important to written composition. Scoring guidelines for these skills are not precisely defined by numerical counts or values. Rather, they are dependent upon teacher judgment. Utilizing teacher judgment rather than exact numerical criteria expedites the handscoring process and gives accurate relative scores.

40. INDENTS FIRST WORD OF PARAGRAPH.

3. The first word is indented.

1. The first word is not indented.

41. CAPITALIZES FIRST WORD OF SENTENCES [sentences here include fragments that students perceive as sentences].

3. All or most sentences have a capital letter for the first word.

2. Some sentences have a capital letter for the first word.

1. Many or all sentences do not have a capital letter for the first word.

42. INCLUDES PERIODS AT THE ENDS OF SENTENCES [sentences here include fragments that students perceive as sentences].

3. All or most sentences end with periods or with other appropriate terminal punctuation.

2. Some sentences end with periods or with other appropriate punctuation.

1. Many or all sentences do not end with periods or other appropriate punctuation.

43. SPELLS CORRECTLY.

3. All or most words are spelled correctly.

2. Several words are misspelled.

1. Only a few words are spelled correctly.

Comment: Many misspellings of the same word should be evaluated as one misspelled word.

44. WRITES LEGIBLY.

3. All or most words are readable and have appropriate size, shape, slant, spacing, and alignment.

2. Many words are readable, and unreadable words do not interfere with comprehension of content.

1. Many words are unreadable so that content is difficult or impossible to read.

Figure 4. Scoring Guidelines for Writing Sample (Grade 3)

Grade 3

The stimulus for the grade 3 writing sample (see Figure 2) was designed to elicit descriptive and narrative content. The sample was scored for 97% (33,315) of the students taking the Written Composition section of the SES. Total good/acceptable/unacceptable scores were 45/39/22%. Scores for the individual criteria are presented in Table 9.

Students received more "good" scores for form (53/30/23%) than for content (38/46/21%). However, for the combined categories of "good" and "acceptable," form (83%) and content (84%) scores are nearly identical.

On the individual content categories, students scored highest on "Writes a title for a paragraph" and lowest on "Includes an appropriate conclusion." Lower scores for "conclusion" may be explicable on the basis of students' prior practice. Many stories that students write through third grade are straightline narratives, which, unlike climactic narratives, do not require a conclusion. However, the story prompted by the item stimulus is a climactic narrative.

The total scores on form skills were slightly depressed by students' performance on paragraph indentation. Spelling skills received lower scores than capitalization and punctuation, perhaps because students may not be familiar with the spellings of terms used to describe characters and their actions. The relatively high scores for legibility of handwriting may reflect the high degree of

Table 9

Grade 3 Writing-Sample Scores

			% in category		
			G	A	U
CONTENT:	35.	Writes a title for a paragraph	38	49	14
	36.	Describes characters.	35	42	23
	37.	Writes a story line that is appropriate for the picture.	40	42	18
	38.	Includes an appropriate conclusion.	37	35	28
	39.	Shows creativity and originality.	38	62	
Total			38	46	21*
FORM:	40.	Indents first word of paragraph.	62		38
	41.	Capitalizes first word of sentences.	58	21	21
	42.	Includes periods at the ends of sentences.	56	23	21
	43.	Spells correctly.	35	41	24
	44.	Writes legibly.	56	35	9
Total			53	30	23*
TOTAL			45	39	22*

*Totals add up to more than 100% because every criterion does not have three possible ratings.

Grade 6

The writing-sample item for grade 6 was designed to elicit descriptive and persuasive content within a letter format. See Figure 5 for that stimulus.

The writing sample was scored for 95% (35,439) of those students taking the Written Composition section of the SES. Total good/acceptable/unacceptable scores were 51/34/16%. See Table 10 for scores on the individual criteria.

Scores for format (68/22/10%) were higher than scores for either content (51/38/14%) or form (45/35/20%). However, scores for combined categories of "good" and "acceptable" were 80% or higher on all three kinds of skills, so students did quite well on the writing-sample item. The lowest scores for content were given to "Describes feelings in specific words." Verbalizing their emotions may seem awkward or embarrassing to students; however, only 18% failed to attempt such descriptions.

Although scores for "Places letter parts correctly on the page" were slightly lower than those for "Includes all parts of a personal letter," most students appear to have had little or no difficulty with either of these skills.

Highest form-skill scores were again (as in third grade) given for handwriting skills (i.e., "Writes legibly and indents paragraphs"). The lowest form-skill scores were given for "Capitalizes and punctuates correctly." These lower scores may result from difficulty with the special capitalization and punctuation required by the personal-letter format (e.g., capitalizing the salutation and include a comma after it).

Writing Sample

Write a letter to a friend. The purpose of the letter is to convince your friend to watch your favorite television program.

- Tell your friend that you think he or she should watch the program.
- Give the name of the program.
- Tell how the program makes you feel when you watch it. Use exact words that describe your feelings.
- Give two more good reasons why your friend should watch the program.
- Include all parts of a personal letter and put each of them in the right place on the page.
- Use good grammar and language.
- Write complete sentences.

When you finish your letter, give it to your teacher with this booklet.

Figure 5. Writing-Sample Stimulus for Grade 6.

Table 10

Grade 6 Writing-Sample Scores

			% in category		
			G	A	U
CONTENT:	37.	States a point of view.	68	22	10
	38.	Describes feelings in specific words.	48	34	18
	39.	Includes reasons to support opinion.	49	35	16
	40.	Includes content conventions appropriate for a personal letter	55	33	12
	41.	Shows creativity and originality.	34	66	
Total			51	38	14*
FORMAT:	42.	Includes all parts of a personal letter.	71	19	9
	43.	Places letter parts correctly on the page.	65	25	10
Total			68	22	10
FORM:	44.	Uses complete sentences.	49	31	20
	45.	Uses correct grammar.	43	36	21
	46.	Capitalizes and punctuates correctly.	37	38	26
	47.	Spells correctly.	45	33	22
	48.	Writes legibly and indents paragraphs.	50	36	13
Total			45	35	20
TOTAL			51	34	16*

*Totals add up to more than 100% because every criterion does not have three possible ratings.

Scores for "Spells correctly" may have been affected negatively by the difficulty of spellings for terms students need to use to describe their feelings. Writing for the audience stipulated by the sample ("Write a letter to a friend") may have affected scores for "Uses correct grammar," since students do not feel so compelled to consider grammar when they address their friends rather than their teacher. However, the prompt did instruct students to "Use good grammar and language."

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PART II: COMPETENCY BASED ASSESSMENTS

PART II

COMPETENCY BASED ASSESSMENTS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS
(District of Columbia Public Schools)

Introduction

"The Development of Item Specifications for Language Arts Assessment"

"Part I:	Listening" (Technical Note No. 2-82/01)
"Part II:	Grammar Usage" (Technical Note No. 2-82/02)
"Part III:	Sentence Structure" (Technical Note No. 2-82/03)
"Part IV:	Capitalization and Punctuation" (Technical Note No. 2-82/04)
"Part V:	Language Expression" (Technical Note No. 2-82/05)
"Part VI:	Spelling" (Technical Note No. 2-82/06)
"Part VII:	Literature" (Technical Note No. 2-82/07)
"Part VIII:	Study Skills, Mass Media, and Nonverbal Communication" (Technical Note No. 2-82/08)

COMPETENCY-BASED ASSESSMENTS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Working in collaboration with the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), SWRL developed assessment instruments for language arts for each semester (A and B) of Levels 1-6 (i.e., grades 1-6) in the district's elementary schools. DCPS presented SWRL with a list of language-arts objectives to be assessed by the district. These objectives were selected from the district's continuum of objectives, as described in the DCPS Competency-Based Curriculum guide (CBC). This guide describes each objective in the continuum.

SWRL responded to the list before writing actual specifications and items. This response pointed out overlaps between reading and language-arts objectives and recommended that some objectives be deleted from assessment. These deletions were recommended (1) when objectives were assessed by the same skill at a different semester or by another skill in the specifications, or (2) when the skill did not lend itself to large-scale assessment.

SWRL also described appropriate assessment differences for objectives that had been listed by DCPS for testing at more than one semester (e.g., Apply the rule for capitalizing proper nouns naming particular places). For some of these objectives, differences in content could be described (e.g., capitalize names of streets, towns, cities, states, and countries in one semester, and names of rivers, lakes, parks, and continents in the other semester). For other objectives, assessment could only be differentiated by the type of format or the vocabulary level used in the items (e.g., orders letters to make words). SWRL also commented that some objectives, on the basis of SWRL's analyses of textbook presentation, seemed to be specified for assessment at a grade that might be too early for mastery (e.g., Identify pronouns, an objective listed for the first semester of grade two).

In responding to SWRL's recommendations, DCPS moved some objectives to higher grades and deleted others. The district also considered many of the differentiations SWRL had proposed for objectives listed for assessment at more than one semester. However, DCPS curriculum specialists ultimately decided not to differentiate between semesters of assessment, but to assess the whole objective for every semester at which that objective was listed.

Specifications and items were then prepared by SWRL staff for 11 categories of objectives:

Listening (perceiving content aurally rather than visually)

Grammar Usage (e.g., identifying parts of speech)

Sentence Structure (e.g., ordering ideas, constructing sentences)

Capitalization (i.e., using rules for capitalization)

Punctuation (i.e., using rules for punctuation)

Language Expression (e.g., using correct verb forms)

Spelling (e.g., spelling words by joining affixes)

Literature (e.g., identifying genres)

Study Skills (e.g., using dictionaries)

Mass Media (e.g., distinguishing between print and non-print media)

Nonverbal Communication (e.g., understanding messages conveyed by signs)

The specifications were based on an analysis of the CBC, analyses of language-arts textbooks (Humes, 1978; Cronnell, 1978), and the research on composing (e.g., Humes, 1980a). In some cases where the statement of the objective was amenable to interpretations other than that described in the CBC, special care was taken to insure that resulting assessments would align with the local program.

For each assessed objective, complete specifications were provided. These specifications provided content descriptions that noted factors involved in the use of each objective, including other inherent skills and prerequisite knowledge. Each content description was followed by an item description. Where feasible, productive tasks, particularly writing samples, were specified as the appropriate assessment, since research generally indicates that writing skills are most appropriately assessed by actual composing tasks (e.g., Cooper & Odell, 1977). Scoring keys and guides developed on the basis of current research (Humes, 1980b) were also provided for the writing samples. For multiple-choice items, the item description explained both construction of the item stimulus and the answer choices and noted any important considerations relevant to assessing an objective in the particular item format. Items to be used in the assessment instrument were presented. For complete specifications, see the eight reports that follow:

"The Development of Item Specifications for Language Arts Assessment"

- "Part I: Listening" (Technical Note No. 2-82/01)
- "Part II: Grammar Usage" (Technical Note No. 2-82/02)
- "Part III: Sentence Structure" (Technical Note No. 2-82/03)
- "Part IV: Capitalization and Punctuation" (Technical Note No. 2-82/04)

"Part V: Language Expression" (Technical Note No. 2-82/05)

"Part VI: Spelling" (Technical Note No. 2-82/06)

"Part VII: Literature" (Technical Note No. 2-82/07)

"Part VIII: Study Skills, Mass Media, and Nonverbal Communication" (Technical Note No. 2-82/08)

The vocabulary was controlled in the items so that words used for the A-level surveys were generally those listed in Harris and Jacobson (1972) at two or more grade levels below the level of assessment. The words for the B-level surveys were those listed for one or more grade levels below. This vocabulary control helped ensure that reading ability was not a primary factor in determining students' language-arts success. However, technical terms at or above grade level were sometimes used in the directions either because no synonyms were available or because the district preferred to use these terms.

SWRL and district personnel met to review specifications. A few items were subsequently revised and submitted to the district for its approval. After the assessment instruments were administered and scored, SWRL analyzed the data to determine what, if any, changes needed to be made. Very few problem items were identified. However, revisions were suggested for those that were found.

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TN 2-82/01

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL LABORATORY
TECHNICAL NOTE

DATE: January 1, 1982
NO: 2-82/01

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART I: LISTENING

Bruce Cronnell and Ann Humes

ABSTRACT

The specifications reflect the elementary schooling intentions of a large metropolitan school district. The specifications include content descriptions, item descriptions that detail the construction of appropriate assessment items, and sample items for assessing the objectives.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART I: LISTENING

Bruce Cronnell and Ann Humes

Working in collaboration with a large metropolitan school district, SWRL developed assessment instruments for language arts for each semester (A and B) of Levels 1-6 (i.e., grades 1-6) in the district's elementary schools. This paper provides detailed specifications for one large category of objectives in the core curriculum that is described in the district's instructional guide. In the first section of the paper, background for the project is provided. This background includes a discussion of some of the activities SWRL staff engaged in prior to constructing the assessment specifications; it also outlines the types of information and material included in the language-arts specifications. The background is followed by specifications for the objectives in the Listening category.

BACKGROUND

Presented with a list of language-arts objectives to be assessed by a large metropolitan school district, SWRL responded to the list before writing actual specifications and items. This response pointed out overlaps between reading and language arts objective and recommended that particular objectives be deleted from assessment. These deletions were recommended (1) when objectives were assessed by the same skill at a different semester or by another skill in the specifications, or (2) when the skill did not lend itself to large-scale assessment.

SWRL also described appropriate assessment differences for objectives that had been listed by the district for testing at more than one semester. For some of these objectives, differences in content could be described; for other objectives, assessment could only be differentiated by the type of format or the vocabulary level used in items. SWRL also commented that some objectives, on the basis of SWRL's analyses of textbook presentation, seemed to be specified for assessment at a grade that might be too early for mastery.

In responding to SWRL's recommendations, the district moved some objectives to higher grades and deleted others. The district also considered many of the differentiations SWRL had proposed for objectives listed for assessment at more than one semester. However, district people ultimately decided not to differentiate between or among levels of assessment, but to assess the whole objective for every semester at which that objective was listed.

Specifications and items were then prepared by SWRL staff. The specifications were based primarily on an analysis of the district's instructional guide, together with SWRL's analyses of language-arts textbooks. In some cases, where the statement of the objective was amenable to interpretations other than that described in the guide, special care was taken to insure that resulting assessments would align with the local program, as described in the district's guide.

For each assessed objective, complete specifications were provided. These specifications include content descriptions that note factors involved in the use of each objective, including other inherent skills

and prerequisite knowledge. Each content description is followed by an item description. The item description explains both the item stimulus and the answer choices. The item description also notes any other important considerations relevant to assessing an objective in the particular item format. At least one sample item is then presented for each objective; more items are included in the case of items that are interrelated by format or content. The sample items generally are ones actually used in the assessment instruments, with the following changes made for clarity in this presentation:

1. The correct answer is marked with a number sign (#).
2. Directions are included with each item. Because these items assess listening, directions in the actual instrument are printed separately for the teacher to read to students; in addition, more specific instructions are provided at the early levels; e.g., "Look at number __."

Because listening ability is assessed, neither lower- nor upper-level students are required to read the items used in the Listening section; these passages are read by the teacher. Only the answer choices, which the teacher also reads, are printed in the test booklet. After level 2 some directions are printed in the booklet. Materials that appear only in teacher materials are enclosed in boxes in the specifications.

Some of the vocabulary may be above reading grade level, but these words should be within students' oral repertoires. Consequently, reading ability should not limit students' demonstration of their ability to listen. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to explain directions if students do not understand them. Teachers are also permitted to help students if students do not understand how to do a task, so long as the help does not cue the correct response.

The assessment specifications are presented below. In general, these specifications are those originally submitted to the district because they are considered the most appropriate match for classroom instruction and student ability.

In addition to the Listening objectives covered in Part I, other areas of language arts assessment are described in the following documents:

Part II: Grammar Usage
Part III: Sentence Structure
Part IV: Capitalization and Punctuation
Part V: Language Expression
Part VI: Spelling
Part VII: Literature
Part VIII: Study Skills, Mass Media, and Nonverbal Communication

INDEX OF SPECIFICATIONS

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5. Identify descriptive words and phrases 19
6. Identify compound words 20
7. Describe inferred meaning from context 22
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SPECIFICATIONS

OBJECTIVE 1

. Identify rhyming elements.

Assessment Level: 1A

CONTENT

The student listens to a pair of words and identifies the pairs that rhyme. Rhymes are words that end with the same vowel sound or that end with the same vowel sound and the same consonant sound(s); e.g., *grow-so*, *let-pet*, *cane-rain*, *hand-band*. Knowledge of the term *rhyme* is prerequisite to this objective.

> *Comment*: Students at this level may produce rhymes more easily than they can identify them.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Each item consists of a pair of words read by the teacher. The words may rhyme or not rhyme (as in item 1). The rhymes are of three types: (1) word pairs that end with the same vowel sound, e.g., *slow-go*; (2) word pairs that end with the same vowel sound and the same consonant sound, e.g., *cane-rain*; (3) word pairs that end with the same vowel sound and the same two (or more) consonant sounds, e.g., *hand-band*. The non-rhymes are of three types: (1) word pairs ending with different vowels, e.g., *tree-knew*; (2) word pairs containing the same vowel but different final consonants, e.g., *big-hit*; (3) word pairs containing the same final consonant(s) but different vowels, e.g., *fill-ball*. All word pairs (rhymes and non-rhymes) begin with different sounds.

Students respond by marking either "yes" or "no" on the test booklet.

ITEMS

Directions: Do these words rhyme? *

1. fill - ball

yes no

0 #0

---

*As previously noted, content within boxes appears only in teaher materials.

OBJECTIVE 2

Identify a complete thought.

Assessment Levels: 1A, 1B

Comment: Although the objective statement uses the term complete thought, the skill as described in the instructional guide pertains to complete sentence. Many complete thoughts are not complete sentences (e.g., phrasal answers to questions), and many complete sentences are hard to interpret as complete thoughts (e.g., wh questions). In the text below, the term complete sentence is used to describe content; however, in the assessment items, the term complete thought is used since that is the term students have presumably learned from instruction.

CONTENT

The student distinguishes between a group of words that comprises a complete simple sentence and a group of words that does not comprise a complete simple sentence. A complete simple sentence is a sentence (1) containing one main clause with a subject and a finite verb and (2) containing no subordinate clauses.

Comment: Imperative sentences and some exclamatory sentences are exluded by this definition of a complete simple sentence because they are structurally similar to groups of words that do not comprise complete sentences, and children at this age are not capable of making such sophisticated distinctions.

Groups of words that do not comprise complete simple sentences may be of three basic types:

1. groups of randomly arranged words that make no sense syntactically. Such groups of words may be either rearranged sentences (e.g., Runs boy the away, which is derived from The boy runs away) or groups of words that in no way could be arranged as a sentence (e.g., Drink book girl fast).

2. groups of words that could be parts of sentence but do not have syntactic structure. Such groups of words may be either incomplete sentences (e.g., They ran to the) or sentences with a word or words missing in the middle (e.g., Those people want eat).

3. groups of words that comprise syntactic units that could be parts of complete sentences; e.g.:

OBJECTIVE 2 (continued)

predicates: Went to the store.
noun phrases: The large brown dog.
prepositional phrases: In the house.
gerund phrases: Running through the park.
subordinate clauses: When I was little.

These three types of word groups that do not comprise complete sentences range from easy to distinguish from complete sentences (type 1) to difficult to distinguish from complete sentences (type 3).

Comments: Type 3 word groups are, in fact, considered sentences when they are answers to questions (e.g., Where's your friend? In the house.). In addition, speakers (even educated speakers) often say such word groups with sentence intonation. Moreover, even in writing, such word groups may be treated as complete sentences--not only in dialogue, where they match normal spoken usage, but also in other texts where skilled writers use such phrases for rhetorical effect.

Another problem with type 3 word groups is that they frequently can be considered to be "complete thoughts." For example, When I Was Little could be the title of a story or a picture and would then express the main idea, which surely must be a "complete thought."

At Level 1A, assessment is of type 1 word groups that do not comprise complete sentences. At Level 2, type 2 word groups are assessed; type 3 word groups are not assessed because of the many difficulties associated with them, as noted in the preceding comment.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Each item consists of a group of four words. (Items are short to lessen students' processing load.) Half the items are complete simple sentences that contain a subject and a finite verb. At Level 1A, the other half consists of groups of randomly arranged words--either rearranged sentences (as in item 1) or groups of words that in no way could be arranged as sentences (as in item 3). At Level 1B, the other half consists of groups of words that could be part of a sentence but do not have syntactic structure--either incomplete sentences (as in item 1) or sentences with a word or words missing in the middle (as in item 3).

The teacher asks whether each group of words is a "complete thought." (The term complete thought is used in the directions because this is the term that is supposed to be used in instruction and is therefore presumably the term that is familiar to students.) The teacher also

OBJECTIVE 2 (continued)

reads each group of words. Students respond by marking either "yes" or "no" on the test booklet.

ITEMS

Level 1A

Directions: Is this group of words a complete thought?

1. Runs boy the away.

yes	no
○	●

2. My friends are here.

yes	no
●	○

3. Drink book girl fast.

yes	no
○	●

Level 1B

Directions: Is this group of words a complete thought?

1. They ran to the

yes	no
○	●

2. John likes to swim.

yes	no
●	○

OBJECTIVE 2 (continued)

3. Those people want eat.

yes	no
0	≠0

OBJECTIVE 3

Identify the sequence of ideas.

Assessment Level: 1B

CONTENT

The student listens to a story containing several ordered events and then identifies the order in which the events happen in the story.

> Comment: Although the objective statement refers to "ideas," the instructional guide indicates that "events" are the content.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The item consists of a story read by the teacher and three pictures randomly arranged in the test booklet. The story is short (3-4 sentences) so that students can remember what they have heard. The story includes three consecutive events; the pictures illustrate these three events and thus comprise three items. After reading the story, the teacher asks which picture illustrates the first, next, and last events in the story. Students respond by marking the appropriate numbers (1, 2, 3) under the pictures.

ITEMS

Teacher Materials: Listen carefully to this story so you can answer some questions. Pay attention to the order that things happen in the story.

One day Annie went to the park by herself. First she played on the swings. Next she played on the bars with her friend Maria. When it was time to go, Annie waved good-bye to Maria.

1. Find the picture for what happened first. Fill in the circle under 1 for that picture.
2. Find the picture for what happened next. Fill in the circle under 2 for that picture.
3. Find the picture for what happened last. Fill in the circle under 3 for that picture.

OBJECTIVE 3 (continued)

[picture: little girl (Annie) waving good-bye to another little girl (Maria)]

1	2	#3
0	0	0

[picture: girl (Annie) on park swings--no other children]

#1	2	3
0	0	0

[picture: girl (Annie) playing with another girl (Maria) at the park--on bars]

1	#2	3
0	0	0

OBJECTIVE 4

Identify the main idea.

Assessment Levels: 2A, 3A, 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 6B

CONTENT

The student listens to a passage and identifies the main idea of the passage. The main idea is the central thought of a passage. It can be explicitly stated, or it may be an implicit idea that the listener infers from hearing several details that help bring the central idea to mind. At the elementary school level, the details must offer clear and unambiguous support for the central idea that the speaker wants the listener to recognize.

> Comment: Although this objective is assessed at Levels 2A, 3A, 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, and 6B, instruction is presented in the curriculum guide only at the second grade level. Assessment for these levels is differentiated by the difficulty of the listening passages and, in part, by the performance mode of the items.

ITEM DESCRIPTIONS

The teacher reads a brief passage and the answer choices, and students select the main idea. The correct answer and the distractors are printed in the student booklet. The correct answer is a phrase or sentence that generalizes the content of the story. The distractors are ideas that are either too specific or too general.

At Levels 2A and 3A, the passage is 4-7 sentences long and includes easily understood activities. The student chooses one of three possible titles for the passage, called a "story" in the directions. The passage is labeled a story even when it is a description rather than a narrative, since this term is most familiar to students.

At Levels 4A and 4B, the student listens to a short narrative or expository passage, and then selects the appropriate title. A second item type is included at Level 4B. For this type, the student listens to a short expository passage read by the teacher and then identifies the main idea by selecting the phrase that completes a sentence (e.g., This story is about ____).

At Levels 5A and 6B, the student listens to a short expository passage read by the teacher and then identifies the main idea of the passage.

At Level 5B, assessment is in two parts:

(1) The student listens to two related expository passages and identifies the main idea for each passage.

OBJECTIVE 4 (continued)

(2) The student next listens to both passages read again by the teacher and selects a title for the two parts taken together. The correct answer is a phrase that generalizes the content of the two parts taken together. Distractors are phrases that would be suitable titles for each part separately.

ITEMS

Level 2A

Directions: Listen to this story and think about a title for it.

Betsy got up very early in the morning. She grabbed her fishing pole and walked down to the lake. Soon after she put her line in the water, Betsy caught a fish. Within an hour, she had caught three big trout. Then she went back to her cabin and cooked the fish for breakfast.

What is the best title for this story?

1. A. Fishing for Breakfast B. Getting Up in the Morning
#　0　　0

C. A Day at the Lake
0

Level 3A

Directions: Listen to the story and think about a title for it.

1. Emily grows vegetables in her back yard. She grows carrots, tomatoes, and peas. She waters her plants often and pulls out the weeds that grow in her little garden. When the vegetables are ripe, she picks them and shares them with her family.

Which is the best title for this story?

A. Life on a Farm
#B. The Vegetable Garden
C. How to Grow Carrots

OBJECTIVE 4 (continued)

Level 4A

Directions: Listen to the story and think about a title for it.

1. Farmer Green had a strange goat. The goat would eat almost anything. It ate paper, cloth, and wood. It even tried to eat metal and rubber. The farmer had to tie the goat to a post to keep it from chewing on his truck.

Which is the best title for this story?

A. How to Raise Goats.
B. The Farmer's Truck
/C. The Hungry Goat

Level 4B

Directions: Listen to the story and think about a title for it.

1. Once upon a time, when animals could speak, there lived a man who hated animals. One day the man stole the animals' speech. From then on, animals never spoke again.

Which is the best title for this story?

A. A Man Who Lived Long Ago
/B. How Animals Lost Their Speech
C. Men and Animals

Directions: Listen to the story and think what the story is about.

2. Sometimes we can guess what an animal looks like when we hear its name. A starfish looks like a star, and the sunfish got its name from its bright colors. One kind of fish has a snout that looks like a paddle. This fish is called the paddlefish.

This story is about ______.

A. the sun and the stars
B. snouts and paddles
/C. fish and their names

OBJECTIVE 4 (continued)

Level 5A

Directions: Listen to the story and think about the main idea.

1. We wear rings mainly as decorations, but rings are also signs of power. Long ago, a queen may have given her ring to a trusted servant. The ring gave the servant the power to be the queen's messenger. A queen could also use her ring for signing letters. She put some hot wax on the letter and pressed her ring against it.

What is the main idea?

/A. how queens used rings
B. how to become a messenger
C. how to sign letters

Level 5B

Directions: Listen to each story and think about the main idea.

1. The sand in the desert is made up of small grains. These grains of sand are blown about by the wind, making them rub against each other. Gradually the grains become round and smooth, and the sand becomes very fine.

What is the main idea?

A. how sand storms begin
B. how the desert wind blows
/C. how desert sand becomes smooth

2. The grains of sand on the sea shore are not smooth and round. The little grains have sharp angles and points. Each of the wet grains has a film of water around it, so it cannot rub against other grains.

What is the main idea?

OBJECTIVE 4 (continued)

A. sharp angles
/B. sea sand
C. film of water

Directions: Listen to the story again and think about a title for it.

3. What would be a good title?

/A. Different Kinds of Sand
B. Sea Sand
C. Desert Sand

Level 6B

Directions: Listen to the story and think about the main idea.

1. Four different kinds of musical instruments are usually found in an orchestra. String instruments are instruments like violins and cellos. Wind instruments include flutes and oboes. Trumpets and trombones are kinds of brass instruments. Some instruments, like drums and cymbals, make a sound when they are hit. These are the percussion instruments. All these instruments play together in an orchestra.

What is the main idea?

A. kinds of drums and violins
B. kinds of brass instruments
/C. kinds of musical instruments

OBJECTIVE 5

Identify descriptive words and phrases.

- Assessment Level: 2B

CONTENT

The student listens to descriptive words and phrases, and understands their meanings. Descriptive words and phrases are adjectives and adjectival phrases, respectively. Knowledge of the technical term descriptive is not prerequisite to this objective.

> Comment: As presented in the instructional guide, this objective can be interpreted in two other ways: (1) the student listens to a story and tells which words and phrases are descriptive; (2) the student uses descriptive words and phrases in an oral description. Since neither of these approaches is amenable to large-scale assessment (and since the latter approach involves speaking, rather than listening), they are not covered by the assessment.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The item consists of a question posed by the teacher and three answer choices printed in the test booklet. The question asks students to identify the picture of an object that has a certain descriptive characteristic, but the question does not name the object. The correct answer is a picture of an object with the described characteristic. The distractors are pictures of objects having a characteristic opposite of that named (e.g., "squat" as opposed to "tall" in item 1) or not capable of being described by the named characteristic.

ITEMS

Directions: Which picture is of something that is tall?

1.	[picture: tall tree]	[picture: squat table]	[picture: telephone]
	#0	0	0

OBJECTIVE 6

Identify compound words

. Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

This objective consists of two sub-objectives. (1) Given a compound word, the student tells the two component words; e.g., for playground, the component words are play and ground. (2) Given two words, the student tells what compound can be formed from them; e.g., news and paper combine to form newspaper. Knowledge of the technical term compound is not prerequisite to this objective.

Comments: Only the second sub-objective is covered by assessment. This objective covers only written compounds: a word composed of two words written together as one word. (Oral compounds include not only those written as one word, but many others written with space between the component words, e.g., White House.)

The value of this objective as a listening skill is highly questionable. However, the district was resolute in its decision to assess it.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Each item consists of two pairs of words. One pair (e.g., A in item 1) consists of the component words of a compound; to ensure that the words are understood as forming a compound, they must not otherwise occur together except as a compound (e.g., not grand + mother, which could be grand mother as well as grandmother). The other pair (e.g., B in item 1) consists of an adjective plus a noun; the adjective-noun phrase is meaningful, but not a compound. Since this is a test of listening ability, the directions and the items are read by the teacher. The items are also printed in the test booklet to ease students' memory load. The teacher asks students to identify the word pair that "can be put together to make one word."

OBJECTIVE 6 (continued)

ITEMS

Directions: Which words can be put together to make one word? (Teacher reads choices.)

1. #A. work + book

   (Read: "work and book")

   B. small + child

   (Read: "small and child")

OBJECTIVE 7

Describe inferred meaning from context.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student listens to short passage and identifies the meaning that can be inferred from the passage. Since that meaning is not explicitly stated in the passage, the student must derive the meaning by reasoning--by making a conclusion based on evidence in the passage.

> Comment: Examples in the instructional guide sometimes require students to make inferences based on a single sentence. However, a sentence often does not provide sufficient context for drawing inferences. Consequently, assessment focuses on inferences drawn from a multi-sentence passage.

Knowledge of the term infer is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student listens to a short passage read by the teacher and selects the sentence that states a meaning that can be inferred from the passage. Distractors are of two types: (1) a sentence that states an inference that is incorrect, given the passage, as B; (2) a sentence that states an inference that can be neither proven nor disproven from the passage, as A.

ITEMS

Directions: Listen to the story and answer the questions.

Pablo gritted his teeth as he straightened up the living room and picked up everything his friends had left behind. He frowned and muttered to himself as he vacuumed the room.

1. What can you infer from this story?

A. Pablo has a dog.
B. Pablo liked to vacuum.
✓C. Pablo was angry about the mess.

OBJECTIVE 8

Identify standards of good listening.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student identifies the following standards of good listening, as specified in the "Guide for Good Listening" in the instructional guide:

a. Look at the speaker and try to concentrate on what he sic is saying.
b. Try to pick out the main points the speaker is making.
c. Try to notice what details the speaker uses in developing his sic main points.
d. Decide whether or not you can agree with all the facts given.
e. Make a note of anything the speaker says that puzzles you.
f. When the speaker finishes, ask any questions you have about what he sic has said.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The item consists of three imperative sentences that indicate ways in which someone might listen. The student chooses the sentence that is not one of the standards in the "Guide for Good Listening." The correct answer is a bad listening behavior--one that is the opposite of the standards in the "Guide for Good Listening." Distractors are two of the standards listed above.

ITEMS

Directions: What is not a good way to listen?

1. A. Try to pick out the main points the speaker is making.
   #B. Agree with all the facts that the speaker gives.
   C. Make a note of anything the speaker says that puzzles you.

OBJECTIVE 9

Demonstrate the skill of attentive listening.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student demonstrates the ability to listen attentively by following oral directions. Attentive listening is defined as intent listening that requires concentration. It is focused on one person or one form of communication.

> **Comment:** Instruction also includes attentive listening to sounds. This is not assessed because of the difficulty of standardizing sounds for large-scale assessment.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a description of directions given to a named individual. The teacher reads the directions only once. The directions contain two components (e.g., "print" and "underline"). The student chooses the answer that illustrates the correctly followed directions (e.g., a printed name that is underlined). Distractors do not match for one of the dimensions of the directions (e.g., printed but not underlined; underlined but written in cursive).

> **Comment:** This item type provides an indirect measure of the objective. Constructed-response items (where the student follows oral directions) would be preferable, but would require considerable hand-scoring.

ITEMS

> Directions: Betsy Jackson was asked to print her name and to underline it.
> Which answer follows the directions?

1. A. Betsy Jackson
   B. Betsy Jackson
   #C. Betsy Jackson

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART II: GRAMMAR USAGE

Ann Humes, Larry Gentry, Bruce Cronnell, Joe Lawlor

ABSTRACT

The specifications reflect the elementary schooling intentions of a large metropolitan school district. The specifications include content descriptions, item descriptions that detail the construction of appropriate assessment items, and sample items for assessing the objectives.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART II: GRAMMAR USAGE

Ann Humes, Larry Gentry, Bruce Cronnell, Joe Lawlor

Working in collaboration with a large metropolitan school district, SWRL developed assessment instruments for language arts for each semester (A and B) of Levels 1-6 (i.e., grades 1-6) in the district's elementary schools. This paper provides detailed specifications for one large category of objectives in the core curriculum that is described in the district's instructional guide. In the first section of the paper, background for the project is provided. This background includes a discussion of some of the activities SWRL staff engaged in prior to constructing the assessment specifications; it also outlines the types of information and material included in the language-arts specifications. The background is followed by specifications for the objectives in the Grammar Usage category.

BACKGROUND

Presented with a list of language-arts objectives to be assessed by a large metropolitan school district, SWRL responded to the list before writing actual specifications and items. This response pointed out overlaps between reading and language-arts objectives and recommended that particular objectives be deleted from assessment. These deletions were recommended (1) when objectives were assessed by the same skill at a different semester or by another skill in the specifications, or (2) when the skill did not lend itself to large-scale assessment.

SWRL also described appropriate assessment differences for objectives that had been listed by the district for testing at more than one semester.

For some of these objectives, differences in content could be described; for other objectives, assessment could only be differentiated by the type of format or the vocabulary level used in the items. SWRL also commented that some objectives, on the basis of SWRL's analyses of textbook presentation, seemed to be specified for assessment at a grade that might be too early for mastery.

In responding to SWRL's recommendations, the district moved some objectives to higher grades and deleted others. The district also considered many of the differentiations SWRL had proposed for objectives listed for assessment at more than one semester. However, district people ultimately decided not to differentiate between or among levels of assessment, but to assess the whole objective for every semester at which that objective was listed.

Specifications and items were then prepared by SWRL staff. The specifications were based primarily on an analysis of the district's instructional guide, together with SWRL's analyses of language-arts textbooks. In some cases, where the statement of the objective was amenable to interpretations other than that described in the guide, special care was taken to insure that resulting assessments would align with the local program, as described in the district's instructional guide.

For each assessed objective, complete specifications were provided. These specifications include content descriptions that note factors involved in the use of each objective, including other inherent skills

and prerequisite knowledge. Each content description is followed by an item description. The item description explains both the item stimulus and the answer choices. The item description also notes any other important considerations relevant to assessing an objective in the particular item format. At least one sample item is then presented for each objective; more items are included in the case of items that are interrelated by format or content. The sample items are generally ones actually used in the assessment instruments, with the following changes made for clarity in this presentation:

1. The correct answer is marked with a number sign (#).
2. Directions are included with each item. In the actual instrument for grades 1 and 2, directions are printed separately for the teacher to read to students; in addition, more specific instructions are provided at the early levels; e.g., "Look at number _____."

Additionally, teachers are encouraged to read (and explain) directions if students do not understand them. Teachers are also permitted to help students if they do not understand how to do a task, so long as the help does not cue students directly to the correct response.

The vocabulary used is found in the Harris and Jacobson* word list. The words used for the A-level surveys are generally those listed at two or more grades below the level of assessment. The words for the B-level surveys are those listed for one or more grade levels below. Such vocabulary control helps ensure that reading ability is not a primary factor in determining students' language-arts success.

The Harris and Jacobson list does not contain a number of technical terms needed for directions (e.g., sentence, punctuation, capitalize).

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*Harris, A. L., & Jacobson. M. D. Basic elementary reading vocabularies. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

Such words were avoided where possible, but using them was necessary in many cases. In some instances, the technical terms were used at the district's request, despite the availability of acceptable synonyms.

The assessment specifications are presented below. In general, these specifications are those originally submitted to the district because they are considered the most appropriate match for classroom instruction and student ability.

In addition to the Grammar Usage objectives covered in Part II, other areas of language arts assessment are described in the following documents:

Part I:	Listening
Part III:	Sentence Structure
Part IV:	Capitalization and Punctuation
Part V:	Language Expression
Part VI:	Spelling
Part VII:	Literature
Part VIII:	Study Skills, Mass Media, and Nonverbal Communication

SPECIFICATIONS

OBJECTIVE 1

Identify nouns.

Assessment Level: 1A

CONTENT

The student identifies the noun in a simple sentence. Although the term noun is subject to various definitions, it is defined in the instructional guide as "a person, place, or thing." At this level, the student is expected to know that the phrase naming word refers to those words that designate persons, places, and things. The student is not expected to be familiar with the more technical term noun.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a four-word sentence with only one noun. The student selects the correct answer from three answer choices, listed in order of appearance in the sentence. The distractors are two other words in the sentence. Since pronouns might also be classified as "naming words," pronouns are not used in the sentence.

ITEM

Directions: Which is the naming word in the sentence?

1. Look at the dog.

Look	at	dog
0	0	#0

OBJECTIVE 2

Identify singular and plural nouns.

Assessment Level: 1A

CONTENT

The student demonstrates understanding of the concept of number as it relates to nouns by discriminating between singular and plural forms. Only regular noun plurals, formed by adding -s to the root word, are covered by this objective.

Knowledge of the terms singular and plural is not prerequisite to the objective. Students are expected to know plural forms as "words that mean more than one."

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Presented with both the singular and plural forms of a given noun, the student selects the stipulated form. Singular and plural nouns serve as distractors for each other.

ITEMS

Directions: Which word means more than one?

1. car cars
0 #0

Directions: Which word means only one?

2. book books
#0 0

OBJECTIVE 3

Identify action words.

Assessment Level: 1A

CONTENT

The student identifies the word that is a verb among words representing other parts of speech.

While a verb may be either (1) a word that expresses an action or (2) a word that expresses a state of being or becoming, only those verbs that express an action are included in this objective. Verbs that express a state of being or becoming, commonly referred to as linking verbs, are assessed by Objective 12 at Level 2B. Irregular verbs and past forms are assessed by other objectives.

Knowledge of the term verb is not prerequisite to this objective.

> Comment: This objective, as described in the instructional guide, differs from Objectives 6 (Identify verbs in context) and 11 (Identify regular verbs) only in the complexity of content.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a picture of a character or a group of characters engaged in an easily recognizable activity. The student selects the verb that represents the activity from three answer choices. The correct answer is a verb ("action word") ending with the suffix -ing. The suffix -ing is employed to clearly establish the quality of "action" and to distinguish verbs from other parts of speech (e.g., play can be a noun or a verb, but playing is more often treated as a verb form). However, the -ing forms of verbs may not be in children's reading vocabularies. One distractor is a pronoun that is appropriate for the character(s) in the picture. The other distractor is the name of an object in the picture.

ITEM

Directions: Which word tells what the person in the picture is doing?

1. [picture: boy painting a house]

painting	he	house
#0	0	0

OBJECTIVE 4

Identify a sentence as a complete thought.

Assessment Level: 1A

CONTENT

The student discriminates between a simple sentence and a group of unrelated words. At this level, the student's ability to identify sentences is likely to be based on recognition of semantic "completeness" rather than on knowledge of grammar and syntax; the student recognizes a sentence as a group of words that expresses a complete thought ("says something"), rather than as a subject-predicate construction with particular grammatical and syntactic features.

The instructional guide includes the identification of sentences vs. sentence fragments. However, students at this level probably cannot make such fine distinctions. In fact, young students are likely to identify (and punctuate/capitalize) any semantically unified structure as a sentence; e.g.:

The large brown dog. (noun phrase)
Was running. (verb phrase)
In the park. (prepositional phrase)

Consequently, assessment of this objective has very narrow limits at this level. The student can be asked to identify a simple sentence, but only when that sentence is contrasted with a word group that is clearly not a sentence or a group of related words in a legitimate syntactic structure.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Given two word groups (each capitalized and punctuated as a sentence), the student identifies the group that comprises a sentence. Distractors are strings of unrelated words. Each sentence and distractor consists of four words in order to lessen the reading requirement. Any nouns that are included in the distractors are positioned so that the word group does not appear to be a noun phrase; e.g., "Work have my" is used rather than "Have my work."

ITEM

Directions: Which is a good sentence?

1.	The ball is red. #0	Work have my what. 0

OBJECTIVE 5

Identify possessive nouns.

Assessment Level: 1B

CONTENT

The student identifies possessive nouns. The possessive nouns included here are those formed by adding an apostrophe and the suffix *-s*.

Students at this level are expected only to distinguish between singular nouns and singular possessives. They are not expected to discriminate between plurals ending in *-s* and the possessive case (e.g., *dogs*/*dog's*), nor are they required to distinguish between plural possessives and singular possessives (e.g., *dogs'*/*dog's*).

Familiarity with the grammatical terms *possessive* and *noun* is not prerequisite to this objective, but students should be familiar with the relationship between the use of an apostrophe and the concept of "belonging."

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with three singular nouns and selects the one that shows possession. The correct answer is a singular noun with an apostrophe and the suffix *-s*. The two distractors are singular nouns. To avoid errors that might be incurred through over-generalization of the concept, nouns ending with the letter *s* are not employed as distractors (e.g., *bus*, *dress*). Neither are *-s* plurals used as distractors for the reason noted in the Content section above.

ITEM

Directions: Which word means that something belongs to someone?

1.	mother's	daddy	girl
	#0	0	0

OBJECTIVE 6

Identify verbs in context.

Assessment Level: 1B

CONTENT

The student identifies the verb in a sentence.

While a verb may be either (1) a word that expresses an action or (2) a word that expresses a state of being or becoming, only those verbs that express an action are included in this assessment. Verbs that express a state of being or becoming, commonly referred to as linking-verbs, are assessed by Objective 12 at Level 2B. Irregular verbs and past forms are assessed by other objectives.

Knowledge of the term verb is not prerequisite to this objective. However, students are expected to recognize certain verbs as "doing words."

> Comment: This objective differs from Objectives 3 (Identify action words) and 11 (Identify regular verbs) only in the complexity of content.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a simple sentence that contains only one verb. The student selects the correct answer (the verb) from three answer choices, listed in order of appearance in the sentence. The correct answer is a main verb that represents a physical activity. Since students at this level have had practice in identifying only nouns, verbs, and pronouns (as indicated by the instructional guide), the two distractors are either nouns or pronouns.

ITEM

Directions: Which word is the doing word in the sentence?

1. Pete plays with the ball.

Pete	plays	ball
0	#0	0

OBJECTIVE 7

Identify declarative sentences.

Assessment Level: 1B

CONTENT

The student identifies declarative sentences--statements that end with a period.

Students at this level are expected to discriminate only between declarative and interrogative sentences (i.e., questions). Exclamatory sentences (i.e., showing emotion) and imperative sentences (i.e., giving commands) are assessed at a higher level.

Declarative sentences sometimes differ from interrogative sentences only in terminal punctuation and/or word order, e.g.,:

The doctor is here.	(declarative)
The doctor is here?	(interrogative)
Is the doctor here?	(interrogative)

Consequently, students may identify declarative sentences by terminal punctuation.

Knowledge of the grammatical term declarative is not prerequisite to this objective. Students must, however, be familiar with the term "telling sentence" as a synonym for the more technical term.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a set of two sentences with the same number of words and dealing with similar content. The student identifies the declarative ("telling") sentence. The distractor is an interrogative sentence, properly capitalized and punctuated.

ITEM

Directions: Which sentence is a telling sentence?

1.	Bill has a bike. #0	What is a bike? 0

OBJECTIVE 8

Identify interrogative sentences.

Assessment Level: 1B

CONTENT

The student identifies interrogative sentences--sentences that ask a question and end with a question mark.

Students at this level are expected to discriminate only between interrogative and declarative sentences ("telling sentences"). Exclamatory sentences (i.e., showing emotion) and imperative sentences (i.e., giving commands) are covered by Objectives 14 and 15 at Level 2B.

Interrogative sentences sometimes differ from declarative sentences only in terminal punctuation and/or word order, e.g.:

The doctor is here.	(declarative)
The doctor is here?	(interrogative)
Is the doctor here?	(interrogative)

Consequently, students may identify interrogative sentences by terminal punctuation.

Knowledge of the grammatical term interrogative is not prerequisite to this objective. Students must, however, be familiar with the term "asking sentence" as a synonym for the more technical term.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a set of two sentences dealing with the same number of words and similar content. The student identifies the interrogative sentence. The distractor is a declarative sentence, properly capitalized and punctuated.

ITEM

Directions: Which sentence is an asking sentence?

1.	Sue will go with us. 0	Can Sue go with us? #0

OBJECTIVE 9

Identify pronouns.

Assessment Level: 2A

CONTENT

The student identifies the word that is a pronoun among words representing other parts of speech. A pronoun is a word that can replace a noun (e.g., *he*, *it*, *they*). Some pronouns can also function as noun determiners (e.g., *my* suitcase); however, since these forms are sometimes classified as adjectives, they are not assessed here.

Knowledge of the term *pronoun* is prerequisite to this objective.

The identification of plural pronouns is assessed by Objective 10 at this level, so it is not covered here.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with three words, each a different part of speech. The student selects the word that is a pronoun. The correct answer is a singular personal pronoun. One distractor is a common noun; the other is a verb.

ITEM

Directions: Which word is a *pronoun*?

1.	book	ask	she
	0	0	#0

OBJECTIVE 10

Identify singular and plural pronouns.

Assessment Level: 2A

CONTENT

The student discriminates between singular and plural pronouns. Singular pronouns are those words that can replace nouns referring to one person or thing (e.g., she, it). Plural pronouns replace nouns referring to more than one person or thing (e.g., they, them). Both nominative and objective forms of pronouns are included here.

Knowledge of the terms pronoun, singular, and plural is not prerequisite to this objective. However, the student is expected to know which pronouns refer to one person or thing and which refer to more than one person or thing.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with three pronouns and selects the one that "means one" or the one that "means more than one." When the correct answer is a singular pronoun, the distractors are plural pronouns. When the correct answer is a plural pronoun, the distractors are singular pronouns. Possessive pronouns that end with s (e.g., his, hers) are not used as distractors because the final s may invite some students to identify such pronouns as plurals.

ITEM

Directions: Which word means more than one?

1.	he	they	it
	0	#0	0

OBJECTIVE 11

Identify regular verbs.

Assessment Level: 2A

CONTENT

The student identifies the word that is a verb from among words representing other parts of speech.

> Comment: The objective statement implies that students identify regular verbs as opposed to irregular verbs. However, in the instructional guide, "non-regular verbs" are actually other parts of speech.

While a verb may be either (1) a word that expresses an action or (2) a word that expresses a state of being or becoming, only those verbs that express an action are included in this assessment. Verbs that express a state of being or becoming, commonly referred to as linking-verbs, are assessed for Objective 12 at Level 2B. Irregular verbs and past forms are assessed by other objectives.

Knowledge of the term verb is not prerequisite to this objective. However, students are expected to recognize certain verbs as "action words."

> Comment: This objective differs from Objective 3 only in complexity of content.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with three words, each a different part of speech. The student selects the one that is a verb ("action word"). The correct answer is a present-tense verb that expresses an action. One distractor is a preposition; the other is an adjective. Nouns are not used as distractors since they often suggest an "active" agent (e.g., toy) and are frequently employed as verb forms (e.g., His brother dogged him everywhere he went.).

ITEM

Directions: Which word is the action word?

1.	in	good	jump
	0	0	#0

OBJECTIVE 12

Identify non-action words.

Assessment Level: 2B

CONTENT

The student identifies forms of the verbs *be* and *have*.

The student is expected to be familiar with the following verb forms as listed in the instructional guide:

	be	*have*
Present singular:	I *am* you *are* he, she, it *is*	I *have* you *have* he, she, it *has*
Present plural:	we *are* you *are* they *are*	we *have* you *have* they *have*
Past singular:	I *was* you *were* he, she, it *was*	I *had* you *had* he, she, it *had*
Past plural:	we *were* you *were* they *were*	we *had* you *had* they *had*

Present and past participle forms are not included in this objective, nor is subject-verb agreement. The objective covers the use of these verbs as main verbs only, not as auxiliaries.

Knowledge of the grammatical term *verb* and knowledge of the present and past tense forms of *be* and *have* are prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence that employs a form of the verb *be* or *have*. The student identifies the word in the sentence that is a form of the target verb. The distractors are two other words that appear in the stimulus sentence. The three choices are listed in order of appearance in the sentence.

In assessing the verb *have*, only *has* and *had* (but not *have*) are assessed because the directions must include the verb *have*.

ITEMS

Directions: Which word in the sentence is a form of the verb be?

1. Lucy is very nice.

is	very	nice
#0	0	0

Directions: Which word in the sentence is a form of the verb have?

2. The children had fun.

children	had	fun
0	#0	0

OBJECTIVE 13

Identify irregular verbs.

Assessment Level: 2B

CONTENT

The student identifies verbs as either regular or irregular. Regular verbs form their past and past participle forms by adding -ed to the present form. (This process sometimes entails dropping the final e, doubling the final consonant, or changing the final y to i before adding the suffix.) The past and past participle forms of irregular verbs are formed through spelling and pronunciation changes (e.g., swim, swam, swum). Therefore, the student must know, for example, that the past tense and past participle of work are formed by adding -ed, but that this principle does not apply to bring.

> Comment: According to the instructional guide, students must recognize irregular verbs from their present forms. However, the irregularity is actually found in the past forms. Consequently, the assessment uses past tense forms of verbs--forms that clearly illustrate the difference between regular and irregular verbs.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with three past-tense verbs and selects the one that is irregular. The correct answer is an irregular verb in the simple past tense. Irregular verbs ending with the sounds /d/ or /t/ (e.g., found, caught) are not assessed since their endings are phonologically similar to the inflected ending -ed (e.g., wanted, looked). The distractors are two verbs in the simple past tense that are constructed by adding -ed to the present form.

ITEM

Directions: These words all show past time. Which word is an irregular action word?

1.	sang	worked	called
	#0	0	0

OBJECTIVE 14

Identify imperative sentences.

Assessment Level: 2B

CONTENT

The student identifies imperative sentences as sentences that express a command. Imperative sentences are punctuated with a period and are distinguished by their structure: the subject, you, is usually not stated.

Knowledge of the grammatical term imperative is not prerequisite to this objective. Students are expected to recognize imperative sentences as sentences that "give a command."

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with three sentences, each representing a different type of sentence. The student selects the imperative sentence ("command"). One distractor is a declarative sentence; the other is an interrogative sentence.

ITEM

Directions: Which sentence gives a command?

1. Sit down in the car. #0 Is this your ball? 0

I like to eat cake. 0

OBJECTIVE 15

Identify exclamatory sentences.

Assessment Level: 2B

CONTENT

The student identifies the exclamatory sentence as distinguished from other sentence types. Exclamatory sentences are sentences that end with an exclamation point (e.g., *I need a doctor!*) and generally express strong emotion. However, they are not distinguished by any particular structural characteristics. Sentences that are structurally declarative, interrogative, or imperative can be transformed into exclamatory sentences by changing the terminal punctuation; e.g.:

I need a doctor. → I need a doctor!
What are you doing? → What are you doing!
Call a doctor. → Call a doctor!

Since, by definition, exclamatory sentences always end with an exclamation point, students may identify such sentences by terminal punctuation.

Knowledge of the term *exclamatory* is not prerequisite to this skill. Students are expected to recognize exclamatory sentences as sentences that "show emotion."

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with three different types of sentences, and selects the exclamatory sentence (the sentence that "shows emotion"). One distractor is a declarative sentence; the other is an interrogative sentence. Neither sentence describes feelings.

ITEM

Directions: Which sentence shows emotion?

1. Do not go so fast! #0 David is in the house. 0

Is the tree green? 0

OBJECTIVE 16

Distinguish between common and proper nouns.

Assessment Levels: 3A and 3B

CONTENT

The student distinguishes between common and proper nouns. The student understands that a noun is a word that identifies a person, place, or thing. The student further understands that (1) a common noun refers to general class (e.g., man, city, toy) and does not require a capital letter, and that (2) a proper noun refers to a particular person, place, or thing (e.g., Mary, Florida, City Hall) and always requires a capital letter.

Since a basic difference in the printed forms of common and proper nouns is the non-use or use of capital letters, students may distinguish between the two types on the basis of capitalization rather than word meaning.

Knowledge of the term proper noun is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Presented with three nouns, the student selects the one that is a proper noun. The correct answer is a capitalized proper noun. The distractors are (uncapitalized) common nouns.

ITEM

Directions: Which word is a proper noun?

1. A. hand
   B. picture
   #C. Steve

OBJECTIVE 17

Identify possessive pronouns.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

Given a list of personal pronouns, the student identifies those that show possession. Possessive pronouns indicate ownership or a relationship (e.g., her dog, his friend).

The class of possessive pronouns is composed of the following words:

my, mine his its their, theirs
your, yours her, hers our, ours

Comment: Some authorities classify words such as her, his, their as possessive adjectives rather than possessive pronouns.

The term possessive pronoun is not prerequisite to this objective. At this level possessive pronouns are referred to as words that show "belonging."

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with three personal pronouns and is asked to select the one that is a possessive. The correct answer is a possessive pronoun ending with the suffix -s (i.e., hers). When used in isolation, such pronouns are easier to distinguish as possessives than are unsuffixed forms. Additionally, certain pronouns are also homophones (e.g., its, our, their) and are thereby precluded from assessment. Both distractors are personal pronouns that do not show possession.

ITEM

Directions: Which word shows belonging?

1. he it hers
 0 0 #0

OBJECTIVE 18

Distinguish among declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student identifies four sentence types, characterized by the features explained below.

(1) Declarative sentences are statements that end with a period (e.g., The doctor is here.).

(2) Interrogative sentences are sentences that ask a question and end with a question mark (e.g., Who is your doctor?). Interrogative sentences are often distinguished by their inverted word order or by the presence of a wh word (e.g., who, what). However, sentences that are structurally declarative may be transformed into questions simply by changing their terminal punctuation (e.g., The doctor is here?).

(3) Imperative sentences are sentences that express a command or polite request (e.g., Please call a doctor.). Imperative sentences are punctuated with a period and are distinguished by their structure: the subject, you, is usually not stated.

(4) Exclamatory sentences are sentences that end with an exclamation point (e.g., I need a doctor!). Generally, exclamatory sentences express strong emotion, but they are not distinguished by any particular structural characteristics. Sentences that are structurally declarative, interrogative, or imperative can be transformed into exclamatory sentences by changing the terminal punctuation; e.g.:

I need a doctor!	(declarative structure)
What are you doing!	(interrogative structure)
Call a doctor!	(imperative structure)

Identification of the first three types essentially involves identification of terminal punctuation. However, punctuation of sentence types is not included in this objective. Terminal punctuation is assessed for other objectives.

Knowledge of the terms declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a set of three sentences. The student identifies a declarative ("telling") sentence in item 1, an interrogative ("asking") sentence in item 2, an imperative sentence ("giving a command") in item 3, and an exclamatory sentence ("showing emotion") in item 4. For item 1, both distractors are interrogative sentences since both imperative and exclamatory sentences can be broadly interpreted as "telling" sentences. For item 2, the distractors are a declarative sentence and an imperative sentence. For item 3, the distractors are an interrogative sentence and a declarative sentence, and for item 4, the distractors are a declarative sentence and an imperative sentence.

ITEMS

Directions: Which one is a telling sentence?

1. A. May I have some cake?
#B. Freddie has a new pet.
C. Did you go to the party?

Directions: Which one is an asking sentence?

2. A. We went for a walk.
#B. Is the paint wet?
C. Come with us.

Directions: Which sentence gives a command?

3. A. Have you seen Linda?
B. This is a good book.
#C. Tell me your name.

Directions: Which sentence shows emotion?

4. #A. That ride was too fast!
B. Mary will walk to school.
C. Put on your coat.

OBJECTIVE 19

Distinguish between present and past tense of verbs.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

Given the present and past forms of a regularly formed verb, the student discriminates between the two forms according to tense.

The past forms of regular verbs consist of the present tense form plus -ed. Although this process sometimes entails dropping the final e, doubling the final consonant, or changing the y to i before adding the suffix, the identification of past forms that require spelling changes is not part of this assessment.

Although the instructional guide includes a few irregular verbs (e.g., saw, rode) in instruction, irregular verbs are assessed for another objective.

Knowledge of the term verb is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with the present and past forms of a regular verb and identifies the form that "shows past time." The correct answer is the verb plus the suffix -ed. The distractor is the present tense form of the same verb.

ITEM

Directions: Which word shows past time?

1. A. bark
   #B. barked

OBJECTIVE 20

Identify adjectives in context.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student identifies adjectives in sentences. At this level, the student knows adjectives as "describing words" that are used to convey qualities of size, shape, sense, order, number, etc. For this objective, the adjectives (1) modify nouns, and (2) immediately precede the nouns they modify.

Knowledge of the term adjective is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student reads a simple sentence and identifies the one adjective ("describing word") in the sentence. The answer choices are three words from the sentence, listed in order of their appearance. The correct answer is a descriptive adjective that immediately precedes a noun. The two distractors are either nouns or verbs. The articles a, an, and the are sometimes treated as adjectives (though not commonly taught as such at this level), so they are not employed as distractors.

ITEM

Directions: Which word is a describing word?

1. May I have the red balloon?

A. have
#B. red
C. balloon

OBJECTIVE 21

Identify simple subjects and predicates.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student identifies a word as the simple subject or simple predicate of a sentence.

The student understands that every sentence has a complete subject (i.e., a noun phrase) and a complete predicate (i.e., a phrase that says something about the subject). (Complete subjects and predicates are covered by Objective 22.) The student further understands that one word in the complete subject constitutes the simple subject; it is the "main word" in the complete subject and cannot be omitted if the sentence is to "make sense." Additionally, the student understands that one word in the complete predicate is the simple predicate; it is the headword or main verb in the predicate phrase.

For example: The tiny bird flew away.

Complete subject: The tiny bird

Simple subject: bird

Complete predicate: flew away

Simple predicate: flew

Knowledge of the technical terms simple subject and simple predicate is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student identifies the simple subject in one sentence and the simple predicate in another. In both sentences, the complete subject contains only one noun (the simple subject) and the complete predicate contains only one verb (the simple predicate). Additionally, the simple subject immediately precedes the simple predicate in both sentences.

For item 1, the student identifies the simple subject. The distractors are two words from the predicate phrase--the simple predicate and a noun. For item 2, the student identifies the simple predicate. The distractors are two words from the noun phrase that constitutes the complete subject--the simple subject and an adjective that modifies the simple subject. Answer choices are listed in order of appearance in the sentence.

ITEMS

Directions: Which word is the simple subject of the sentence?

1. The old man laughed at my joke.

#A. man
B. laughed
C. joke

Directions: Which word is the simple predicate of the sentence?

2. The tiny kitten jumped off the table.

A. tiny
B. kitten
#C. jumped

OBJECTIVE 22

Identify complete subjects and predicates.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student (1) identifies a phrase as either the subject or the predicate of a sentence and (2) differentiates between the simple subject/predicate and the complete subject/predicate. Generally, the subject is the word or group of words that identify the entity about which something is stated in the sentence. The predicate is the part of the sentence that expresses what is said about the subject.

Subject phrases are noun phrases (i.e., nouns and their preceding/following modification). Modifiers can include adjectives, determiners, phrases (prepositional and verbal), and clauses. The simple subject is the headword of the subject noun phrase (i.e., the noun to which the modifiers relate).

> Comment: Verbal phrases and noun clauses can also serve as subjects (e.g., Playing basketball is fun; Where he went is a mystery). However, identification of these structures is not assessed.

Predicate phrases are usually anything that comes after the subject; i.e., verb phrases (auxiliary verbs and the main verb) plus objects (direct/indirect), complements, adverbs, and adverbial phrases or clauses. The simple predicate is the headword (or main verb) of the predicate phrase.

> Comment: Many language authorities maintain that the simple predicate is comprised solely of the main verb without any accompanying auxiliaries (e.g., Small birds were singing cheerfully). However, the instructional guide includes auxiliary verbs as part of the simple predicate.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus for each item is a declarative sentence. In item 1, the student identifies the complete subject. The distractors are both parts of the predicate--a verb phrase and an adverbial phrase that modifies the verb phrase. In item 2, the student identifies the complete predicate. The distractors are both parts of the complete subject--a noun phrase and a prepositional phrase that modifies the noun phrase.

ITEMS

Directions: Which is the complete subject of the sentence?

1. The horses were running across the field.

   #A. The horses
   B. were running
   C. across the field

Directions: Which is the complete predicate of the sentence?

2. The people on the train waved to us.

   A. The people
   B. on the train
   #C. waved to us

OBJECTIVE 23

Distinguish between linking verbs and helping verbs.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student discriminates between linking verbs and helping verbs as they are described in the instructional guide: Linking verbs are verbs that do not show action, and helping verbs are those that are part of a predicate containing more than one word.

> Comment: Instructional examples include sentences in which the helping verbs listed below have a linking verb function (e.g., "Tomorrow will be cloudy.")

The following verbs are covered in the instructional guide:

Linking Verbs

am
was
were
is
are

Helping Verbs

should be
have been
may be
can be
shall be
had been
would be
has been
must be
might be
will be
could be

These helping verbs include both simple auxiliaries (e.g., have been) and modal auxiliaries (e.g., must be).

> Comment: One-word helping verbs (e.g., the auxiliary verb have) are not included in the instructional guide. Therefore, they are not assessed.

Knowledge of the terms linking verb and helping verb is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with two sentences, one with a linking verb and one with a helping verb. The sentences have the same subjects. The linking verb is followed by a predicate nominative in (as in item 1) and by a predicate adjective (as in item 2); the helping verb serves as an auxiliary to the main verb for both items. These patterns help students differentiate the verb types by their functions.

The student selects the sentence with a linking verb for item 1 and the sentence with a helping verb for item 2. Consequently, linking verbs and helping verbs serve as distractors for each other. Answer choices are limited to two sentences in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEMS

Directions: Which sentence has a linking verb?

1. #A. Sue and Nick are friends.
   B. Sue and Nick may be called on for help.

Directions: Which sentence has a helping verb?

2. A. My brother's new coat is clean.
   #B. My brother's new coat must be cleaned.

OBJECTIVE 24

Distinguish between present, past, and future tenses of verbs.

Assessment Levels: 4A and 4B

CONTENT

At Level 4A, the student discriminates between present-tense verbs and past-tense verbs. The objective as described in the instructional guide includes only simple present (e.g., He walks; they walk) and simple past tense (e.g., He walked), but not continuous or perfect forms; the verbs covered include both regular and irregular verbs. Simple past tense for regular verbs is formed by adding the -ed suffix to the base word (e.g., walk + ed = walked). Simple past tense for irregular verbs is formed by changing the spelling and pronunciation of the base word (e.g., sing-sang).

At Level 4B, the student discriminates between verbs in the present tense and verbs in the future tense. The objective, as described in instruction, includes only simple present (e.g., She comes; they come) and simple future tense (e.g., She will come), but not continuous and perfect forms. Simple future tense consists of the auxiliary verbs shall or will plus the base form of the verb (e.g., shall go).

> **Comments:** Some authorities do not acknowledge that future tense is equivalent to past and present tense since future can only be conveyed by auxiliaries or by continuing and sometimes simple present forms. Correspondingly, some of the examples in the simple present have an implicit future time meaning (e.g., They draw excellent pictures).

ITEM DESCRIPTION

For Level 4A, the stimuli are two sentences, one with a verb in the simple past tense and one with a verb in the present tense. No other clues to tense are included in the sentences (e.g., words like now, last week). The student selects choice A if the sentence tells about present time or choice B if the sentence tells about past time. Consequently, present and past serve as distractors for each other.

For Level 4B, the stimuli are also two sentences, one with a verb in the simple future tense and one with a verb in the present tense. No other clues to tense are included in the sentences (e.g., words like soon, next week). However, the directions for the items include the word only so that students are not misled by possible future-time occurrences of the action described by simple present (i.e., in item 2, Eric likes to draw now and will probably still like to draw tomorrow). The student selects choice A if the sentence tells about present time or choice B if the sentence tells about future time. Consequently, present and future forms serve as distractors for each other.

At both Level 4A and 4B, only two answer choices are provided in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEMS

Level 4A

Directions: Is the sentence about something that is happening now or something that happened in the past?

1. We moved to the house on Lake Street.

   A. now
   #B. in the past

2. I see a bird in that tree.

   #A. now
   B. in the past

Level 4B

Directions: Is the sentence about something that is happening now or something that will happen only in the future?

1. Bill will work on a picture for the story.

   A. now
   #B. in the future

2. Eric likes to draw cartoons.

   #A. now
   B. in the future

OBJECTIVE 25

Identify descriptive adjectives.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student identifies descriptive adjectives, which are generally defined as words that express some kind of perceptive judgment about or opinion of the characteristics of a noun or pronoun (e.g., green, foolish, big). Instruction covers adjectives that describe kind, color, and size.

> Comment: This objective does not include comparative or superlative forms.

Knowledge of the term descriptive adjective is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with only one descriptive adjective. Any other adjective is a limiting adjective. The student selects the word that conveys a characteristic of a specific noun (i.e., street). Distractors are a noun and verb in the sentence. Answer choices are presented in the same order as they appear in the stimulus sentence.

ITEM

Directions: Which word tells the kind of street?

1. Their family lived on a busy street.

A. family
B. lived
#C. busy

OBJECTIVE 26

Identify limiting adjectives.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student identifies limiting adjectives, which modify nouns or pronouns and are generally defined as articles (e.g., an), demonstratives (e.g., this), possessives (e.g., my), relatives (e.g., which), interrogatives (e.g., what), indefinites (e.g., most), exclamatory words (e.g., what, as in What enthusiasm!), numbers (e.g., one), and words of location or identification (the county courthouse). The instructional guide includes those limiting adjectives that describe quantity (i.e., how much/many?) and identity (i.e., which one?).

Knowledge of the term limiting adjective is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a limiting adjective. The student identifies the word that tells "how many cookies" in item 1 and "which table" in item 2. Distractors are nouns and verb forms. Answer choices are presented in the same order as they appear in the stimulus sentence.

ITEMS

Directions: Which word tells how many cookies?

1. A few cookies were left after the party.

#A. few
B. were
C. party

Directions: Which word tells which table?

2. Please put the books on this table.

A. put
B. books
#C. this

OBJECTIVE 27

Identify adverbs.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student discriminates between adverbs and other parts of speech by identifying an adverb out of context.

For this objective, the adverb functions as a modifier of the verb.

> Comment: The instructional guide does not cover adverbs as modifiers of adjectives, other adverbs, or sentences--the three other units that adverbs most commonly modify.

Knowledge of the term adverb is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student identifies the adverb among three answer choices. Distractors include a noun and an adjective.

ITEM

Directions: Which word is an adverb?

1. A. turtle
#B. slowly
C. yellow

OBJECTIVE 28

Identify adverbs in context.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student discriminates between adverbs and other parts of speech by identifying adverbs in context. Prerequisite to this objective is knowledge of the function of adverbs as modifiers of verbs and knowledge of the term adverb.

> Comment: The instructional guide does not cover adverbs as modifiers of adjectives, other adverbs, or sentences--the three additional units that adverbs commonly modify.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with one adverb modifying the main verb. The student identifies the adverb among three choices. The answer choices are presented in the same order as they appear in the sentence. One distractor is a function word and the other distractor is a noun that is not part of either a phrasal or clausal adverbial modifier in the sentence.

ITEM

Directions: Which word is an adverb?

1. The children walked quickly.

   A. The
   B. children
   #C. quickly

OBJECTIVE 29

Identify personal pronouns.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student discriminates between personal pronouns and other parts of speech by identifying personal pronouns in context. In the instructional guide, personal pronouns are presented as words that chiefly refer to persons.

> Comment: Some authorities define personal pronouns in a more technical sense, as words that make shifts among first, second, and third person (e.g., I, you, he).

The objective, as described in the instructional guide, includes nominative and objective personal pronouns (e.g., I, me), reflexives (e.g., himself), and possessive pronouns (e.g., her).

> Comment: Some authorities classify words such as her, his, their as possessive adjectives rather than as possessive pronouns.

Knowledge of the term personal pronoun is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with one personal pronoun. The student identifies the pronoun among three choices. The answer choices are presented in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The distractors include a verb and an adjective.

ITEM

Directions: Which word is a personal pronoun?

1. The blue coat belongs to him.

A. blue
B. belongs
#C. him

OBJECTIVE 30

Identify indefinite pronouns.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student identifies indefinite pronouns, understanding that an indefinite pronoun does not refer to a specific antecedent. The following indefinite pronouns are covered by this objective: another, any, anyone, both, each, either, everybody, everything, few, many, neither, nobody, none, no one, one, other, others, some, several, somebody, someone. This objective does not cover the identification of function, antecedent, or person-number agreement of indefinite pronouns.

Knowledge of the term indefinite pronoun is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with only one pronoun, an indefinite pronoun. The student selects the pronoun from three answer choices presented in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The distractors are a noun and an adjective in the sentence.

ITEM

Directions: Which word is an indefinite pronoun?

1. The weather was so bad that nobody came to the show.

A. weather
B. bad
#C. nobody

OBJECTIVE 31

Distinguish between demonstrative and interrogative pronouns.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student discriminates between demonstrative and interrogative pronouns, understanding that demonstratives "point out" something and interrogatives introduce a question. The same words may be adjectives or pronouns: Words like this and that are demonstrative pronouns when they replace a noun (e.g., This is a good cookie), but demonstrative adjectives when they modify nouns (e.g., That book is mine); words like whose and which are interrogative pronouns when they replace a noun (e.g., Which is the finger you hurt?), but interrogative adjectives when they modify nouns (e.g., Which book did you read?). However, the instructional guide treats all demonstratives as pronouns.

Knowledge of the terms demonstrative pronoun and interrogative pronoun is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with both a demonstrative and an interrogative pronoun. This stimulus is dialogue for item 2, which assesses the interrogative pronoun. Dialogue is used to ensure that students do not guess the right answer merely because the interrogative pronoun is the first word in the sentence. The student selects the pronoun from three answer choices presented in the same order as they appear in the sentence. Demonstrative and interrogative pronouns serve as distractors for each other. The other distractor is a noun.

ITEMS

Directions: Which word is a demonstrative pronoun?

1. What is the name of this?

   A. What
   B. name
   #C. this

Directions: Which word is an interrogative pronoun?

2. The teacher asked, "Who wrote that?"

   A. teacher
   #B. Who
   C. that

OBJECTIVE 32

Distinguish between descriptive and limiting adjectives.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student discriminates between descriptive adjectives and limiting adjectives. According to the instructional guides, the student understands that descriptive adjectives convey kind, color, and size, while limiting adjectives describe quantity (i.e., how much/many?) and identify (i.e., which one?).

Knowledge of the terms descriptive adjective and limiting adjective is prerequisite to this skill.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a descriptive and a limiting adjective. In item 1, the student identifies the limiting adjective; in item 2, the student identifies the descriptive adjective. Consequently, the limiting and descriptive adjectives serve as distractors for each other. The other distractor is a noun in the sentence.

ITEMS

Directions: Read the sentence, and answer the questions.

The friendly bus driver gave directions to several visitors.

1. Which word is a limiting adjective?

   A. friendly
   B. directions
   #C. several

2. Which word is a descriptive adjective?

   #A. friendly
   B. directions
   C. several

OBJECTIVE 33

Distinguish among adverbs that tell how, when, and where.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student discriminates among adverbs of manner, time, and location. To discriminate among these adverbs, students must understand that adverbs of manner answer the question "how," adverbs of time answer the question "when," and adverbs of location answer the question "where."

Knowledge of the term adverb is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with an underlined adverb of manner, time, or location. The student selects the answer that tells which information is provided by the underlined adverb. Answer choices are question fragments consisting of the key words when, how, and where plus the subject and verb of the sentence. Consequently, the question fragments serve as distractors for each other.

ITEMS

Directions: Which question does the underlined adverb answer?

1. Julie often reads long books.

   #A. when Julie reads
   B. how Julie reads
   C. where Julie reads

2. Jean threw the ball outside.

   A. when Jean threw
   B. how Jean threw
   #C. where Jean threw

3. Jeff folded the shirt smoothly so it would not wrinkle.

   A. when Jeff folded
   #B. how Jeff folded
   C. where Jeff folded

OBJECTIVE 34

Identify adverbial clauses.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student recognizes that an adverbial clause has both a subject and predicate and is a component of a larger syntactic unit, a sentence. The adverbial clauses covered by this objective modify verbs or main clauses. Adverbial clauses are introduced by subordinating conjunctions (e.g., after, because). In the instructional guide, adverbial clauses occupy only the beginning or end position in the sentence.

Knowledge of the term adverbial clause is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with a set of three related sentences. The student selects the correct answer, which is a sentence with an adverbial clause. The adverbial clause is at the end of the sentence in item 1, and at the beginning of the sentence in item 2. Distractors are sentences without adverbial clauses. One distractor is a sentence with another adverbial construction, a prepositional phrase that functions as a modifier of the verb; the prepositional phrase occupies the same position in the sentence as does the adverbial clause. This distractor discriminates between phrases and clauses as adverbs. The other distractor has no adverbial modifiers: In item 1, this distractor has a compound direct object; in item 2, this distractor has a compound subject. The compound object and compound subject also occupy the same position in the sentence as does the adverbial clause. Adjective and noun clauses are not used in the items because the objective does not entail discriminating between kinds of clauses.

ITEMS

Directions: Which sentence has an adverbial clause?

1. A. Mrs. Homes dug up the ground with a shovel.
   B. Mrs. Homes planted vegetables, fruits, and flowers.
   #C. Mrs. Homes watered my plants when I was gone.

2. #A. After the game was over, we went to Lisa's house.
   B. Wind, rain, and pieces of ice pounded Lisa's house.
   C. After the storm, we left Lisa's house.

OBJECTIVE 35

Identify prepositions.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student discriminates between prepositions and other parts of speech by identifying prepositions out of context. Only one-word prepositions (e.g., from) are covered in instruction; phrasal prepositions (e.g., in addition to) are not included.

Knowledge of the term preposition is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with three single-word choices and selects the preposition among them. Distractors are words that are clearly adjectives and adverbs. Some words (e.g., inside) that function as adverbs may also function as prepositions. These words are not used as distractors because their function is not identifiable out of context.

ITEM

Directions: Which word is a preposition?

1. A. red
   #B. into
   C. quietly

OBJECTIVE 36

Identify prepositions in context.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student identifies prepositions in context, distinguishing them from other sentence parts. The student understands that a preposition shows the relation of a word like a noun, verb or pronoun to the rest of the sentence. Only one-word prepositions (e.g., into) are covered in the instructional guide; phrasal prepositions (e.g., in spite of) are not included.

Knowledge of the term preposition is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with one preposition. The student selects the preposition from three answer choices, all of which are function words. The answer choices are presented in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The distractors are other function words--a conjunction and an article.

ITEM

Directions: Which word is a preposition?

1. The girl rode her bicycle down a steep street and then stopped.

#A. down
B. a
C. and

OBJECTIVE 37

Identify prepositional phrases.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student identifies a prepositional phrase, the function of which is to establish an adverbial or adjectival relationship between the object of the preposition and the word that the phrase modifies. However, the objective does not cover identifying that function. Only one-word prepositions (e.g., down) are covered in the instructional guide; phrasal prepositions (e.g., ahead of) are not included.

Knowledge of the term prepositional phrase is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a simple declarative sentence containing one prepositional phrase. The student selects the prepositional phrase among three answer choices. Distractors are other multiple-word sentence parts. One distractor contains the same number of words as the prepositional phrase so that phrase length does not inappropriately cue the correct response.

ITEM

Directions: Which part of the sentence is a prepositional phrase?

1. Pete and Tony sang in the show last week.

   A. Pete and Tony
   #B. in the show
   C. last week

OBJECTIVE 38

Identify conjunctions.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student identifies conjunctions out of context. The student understands that a conjunction is a word that joins words or groups of words. Examples in instruction include coordinating conjunctions (i.e., conjunctions that join two grammatically equivalent sentence elements), subordinating conjunctions (i.e.. conjunctions that join two sentence elements, making one grammatically subordinate), and individual conjunctions that comprise one half of a correlative conjunction (i.e., certain words like either that, when they are paired in a sentence with another conjunction, join elements in that sentence; either . . . or is an example).

Knowledge of the term conjunction is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with three single-word answer choices from which he or she selects the conjunction. The distractors are verbs and adjectives.

ITEM

Directions: Which word is a conjunction?

1. A. green
   B. jump
   #C. after

OBJECTIVE 39

Identify conjunctions in context.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student identifies conjunctions in context, understanding that a conjunction is a word that joins words or groups of words. Examples in the instructional guide include coordinating conjunctions (i.e., conjunctions that join two grammatically equivalent sentence elements), subordinating conjunctions (i.e., conjunctions that join two sentence elements that are not grammatically equivalent), and individual conjunctions that comprise one half of a correlative conjunction (i.e., certain words like either that, when they are paired in a sentence with another conjunction, join elements in that sentence; either . . . or is an example).

Knowledge of the term conjunction is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with one conjunction. The student selects the conjunction from three answer choices presented in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The distractors are other function words. One distractor has the same number of letters as comprise the conjunction.

ITEM

Directions: Which word in the sentence is a conjunction?

1. You may use a pen or a pencil to fill out this form.

#A. or
B. to
C. out

OBJECTIVE 40

Distinguish between coordinate and correlative conjunctions.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student discriminates between coordinate and correlative conjunctions. Coordinate conjunctions join two grammatically equivalent sentence elements (e.g., Janet and Liz). Correlative conjunctions also join grammatically equivalent elements, but they function as word pairs: The first correlative introduces and points out the relationship, and the other correlative completes the joining function (e.g., your guide will be either Janet or Liz).

Knowledge of the terms coordinate conjunction and correlative conjunction is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with three sentences containing conjunctions. The words not joined by the conjunctions are nearly identical in each sentence. The student selects the sentence with the correlative conjunction. Distractors are sentences with coordinate conjunctions, one of which is also part of the correlative conjunction in the item. Students are not asked to identify coordinate conjunctions because coordinate conjunctions also comprise one half of a correlative-conjunction pair (e.g., or is a coordinate conjunction by itself; paired with either, as in either . . . or, or is part of a correlative conjunction). This dual role could mislead the student: The student might select the choice with the correlative either . . . or, for example, when the item elicited identification of a coordinate conjunction because the student recognized or as a coordinate conjunction.

ITEM

Directions: Which sentence contains a correlative conjunction?

1. A. Your guide will be Janet or Liz
   B. Your guides will be Janet and Liz.
   #C. Your guide will be either Janet or Liz.

OBJECTIVE 41

Demonstrate the use of conjunctions as words that connect words, phrases, and sentences.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student demonstrates an understanding that conjunctions are used to join words, phrases, and sentences.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus consists of two sentences with a coordinating conjunction displayed in a box. The student selects the sentence in which the coordinating conjunction has been used correctly to join the sentences. The sentences in item 1 comprise a compound sentence; the sentences in item 2 comprise compound objects of a preposition. Distractors are (1) sentences in which the conjunction is placed at the beginning with the coordinate elements simply strung together (e.g., And Alex gave his tickets to Lisa to me), and (2) sentences in which the conjunction is misplaced within the sentence (e.g., Alex gave his tickets and to Lisa to me).

ITEMS

Directions: Read the two sentences. If you put the sentences together by using the word in the box, which sentence is correct?

1. The hungry kitten wasn't theirs.
They fed it anyway. $\boxed{\text{but}}$

A. But the hungry kitten wasn't theirs, they fed it anyway.
B. The hungry kitten wasn't theirs, they fed but it anyway.
#C. The hungry kitten wasn't theirs, but they fed it anyway.

2. Alex gave his tickets to Lisa.
Alex gave his tickets to me. $\boxed{\text{and}}$

A. And Alex gave his tickets to Lisa to me.
#B. Alex gave his tickets to Lisa and me.
C. Alex gave his tickets and to Lisa to me.

OBJECTIVE 42

Identify interjections.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student identifies interjections as words that express strong emotions. The interjection may consist of one or two words (e.g., Oh! or Ha! Ha!) and is an independent element that does not enter into a syntactic relation with other words.

> Comment: Although the instructional guide uses only exclamation marks after interjections, some authorities use a comma after the interjection and an exclamation mark after the sentence (e.g., Ouch, I bumped my knee!).

Knowledge of the term interjection is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus consists of an interjection and an exclamation point, followed by a complete sentence. The student identifies the interjection among three answer choices presented in the same order as they appear in the sentence. Distractors are nouns and verbs.

ITEM

Directions: Which word is an interjection?

1. Ouch! I bumped my knee on the desk.

#A. Ouch
B. bumped
C. knee

OBJECTIVE 43

Identify compound subjects.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student identifies a compound subject, which consists of two or more subjects joined by and, as well as, when necessary, by appropriate punctuation. The subject in the instructional guide is a simple rather than a complete subject (i.e., nouns plus their modification).

The student understands that the subject is that part of the sentence about which something is stated in the predicate. The student also recognizes that the subject determines the appropriate concordance between subject and predicate--singular or plural agreement.

Implicit in this objective is the ability to discriminate between simple and compound subjects.

Knowledge of the term compound subject is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a set of three sentences. The student identifies the sentence containing a compound subject. Distractors are (1) a sentence with a singular subject preceded by a modifying adjective (e.g., chocolate cake) and (2) a sentence with a plural subject. Distractors do not contain compound parts (e.g., a compound predicate) and, therefore, do not contain conjunctions. Such close distractors are sometimes misleading to students.

ITEM

Directions: Which sentence contains a compound subject?

1. A. Chocolate cake is my favorite dessert.
   #B. Linda and Paul will visit a shoe factory.
   C. All the students enjoyed the movie.

OBJECTIVE 44

Identify compound predicates.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student identifies compound predicates, which he or she understands as two or more main verbs joined by and, as well as, when necessary, by appropriate punctuation. The student understands that the predicate expresses what is said about the subject.

Some predicates in the instructional guide have intervening direct objects or adverbs, and some do not. However, the objective does not cover identifying the elements as part of a complete predicate (i.e., verb phrases consisting of auxiliary verbs and main verbs plus objects, complements, and various single-word, phrasal, and clausal modifiers).

Implicit in this objective is the ability to discriminate between simple and compound predicates.

Knowledge of the term compound predicate is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a set of three sentences. The student identifies the sentence containing a compound predicate. The correct answer is a sentence that has a compound predicate with a direct object or adverbial modifier intervening between the elements of the compound predicate. Distractors are (1) a sentence that contains a nominal direct object and a prepositional phrase in the predicate and (2) a sentence that contains a verbal (i.e., an infinitive or gerund) as a direct object.

ITEM

Directions: Which sentence contains a compound predicate?

1. #A. Alice weeded the garden and cut the lawn.
   B. We can sail the boat across the blue lake.
   C. My horse loves to eat sugar.

OBJECTIVE 45

Identify sentence pattern noun and verb (NV).

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student identifies basic sentences that consist of a noun (which serves as the subject) and a main verb (which serves as the predicate); e.g.:

N + V: Birds fly.

An optional determiner (in instruction, an article--a, an, the) may precede the noun; e.g.:

(D) + N + V: The birds flew.

Comments: Even when the determiner is included in the sentence, it is parenthesized in the labeling.

The instructional guide includes labeling of sentences with the (D), N, and V symbols. However, the assessment in the instructional guide is concerned only with the construction of sentences that conform to presented patterns.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student identifies the sentence containing a specific sentence pattern: either N + V or (D) + N + V. Three answer choices are given, all beginning with the same subject (i.e., the same N or the same (D) + N). The correct answer is a sentence following the specific sentence pattern. Distractors follow two other sentence patterns (with determiner added before the first N, when appropriate, to match the pattern of the correct answer): N + V + N and N + LV + Adj.

Comment: The distractor sentence patterns are derived from Objectives 46 and 49.

ITEMS

Directions: Which sentence follows the pattern N + V?

1. A. Eagles are large.
   B. Eagles hunt animals.
   #C. Eagles fly.

Directions: Which sentence follows the pattern (D) + N + V?

2. #A. The children played.
   B. The children read books.
   C. The children are happy.

OBJECTIVE 46

Identify sentence pattern noun, verb, noun (NVN).

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student identifies basic sentences that consist of a noun (which serves as the subject), a main verb (which is not a linking verb--see Objective 47), and another noun (which serves as the direct object); e.g.:

N + V + N: Dogs chase cats.

An optional determiner (in instruction, an article--a, an, the) may precede either noun; e.g.:

(D) + N + V + N: The dogs chased cats.

N + V + (D) + N: Dogs chased the cats.

(D) + N + V + (D) + N: The dogs chased the cats.

Comments: Even when the determiner is included in the sentence, it is parenthesized in the labeling.

The instructional guide includes labeling of sentences with the (D), N, and V symbols. However, the assessment in the instructional guide is concerned only with the construction of sentences that conform to presented patterns.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student identifies the sentence containing a specific sentence pattern: one of the four illustrated above. Three answer choices are given, all beginning with the same subject (i.e., the same N or the same (D) + N). The correct answer is a sentence following the specific sentence pattern. Distractors follow two other sentence patterns (with a determiner added before the first N, when appropriate, to match the pattern of the correct answer): N + V and N + LV + Adj.

Comment: The distractor sentence patterns are derived from Objectives 45 and 49.

ITEMS

Directions: Which sentence follows the pattern N + V + N?

1. A. Squirrels are furry.
   #B. Squirrels eat acorns.
   C. Squirrels chatter.

Directions: Which sentence follows the pattern (D) + N + V + N?

2. A. The sailors sang.
   B. The sailors were tired.
   #C. The sailors washed clothes.

OBJECTIVE 47

Identify sentence pattern noun, linking verb, noun (NLVN).

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student identifies basic sentences that consist of a noun (which serves as the subject), a linking verb (which is a form of be), and another noun (which serves as the complement); e.g.:

N + LV + N: Bears are animals.

An optional determiner (in instruction, an article--a, an, the) may precede either noun; e.g.:

(D) + N + LV + N: The men are nurses.

N + LV + (D) + N: Andrew is a nurse.

(D) + N + LV + (D) + N: A bear is an animal.

Comments: Even when the determiner is included in the sentence, it is parenthesized in the labeling.

The instructional guide includes labeling of sentences with the (D), N, and LV symbols. However, the assessment in the instructional guide is concerned only with the construction of sentences that conform to the presented patterns.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student identifies the sentence containing a specific sentence pattern: one of the four illustrated above. Three answer choices are given, all beginning with the same subject (i.e., the same N or the same (D) + N). The correct answer is a sentence following the specific sentence pattern. Distractors follow two other sentence patterns (with a determiner added before N, when appropriate, to match the pattern of the correct answer): N + V + N and N + LV + Adj.

Comment: The distractor sentence patterns are derived from Objectives 46 and 49.

ITEMS

Directions: Which sentence follows the pattern N + LV + N?

1. #A. Bees are insects.
   B. Bees make honey.
   C. Bees are busy.

Directions: Which sentence follows the pattern N + LV + (D) + N?

2. A. Betsy won the prize.
   B. Betsy is smart.
   #C. Betsy is a doctor.

OBJECTIVE 48

Identify sentence pattern noun, linking verb, adverb (NLVAdv).

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student identifies basic sentences that consist of a noun (which serves as the subject), a linking verb (which is a form of be), and an adverb (which serves as the complement); e.g.:

N + LV + Adv: Ronnie is here.

An optional determiner (in instruction, an article--a, an, the) may precede the noun; e.g.:

(D) + N + LV + Adv: The boys are here.

Comments: Even when the determiner is included in the sentence, it is parenthesized in the labeling.

Relatively few adverbs fit in this sentence pattern. In most linguistic descriptions of basic sentence patterns, an adverb phrase can be used in the slot following the linking verb. However, the instructional guide gives no indication that the symbol "Adv" refers to more than one word (and all other symbols used clearly refer only to one word). A more common sentence pattern with a final single-word adverb is N + V + Adv (e.g., Judy ran quickly). However, although one item for such a pattern occurs for instruction and another occurs for assessment in the instructional guide, this pattern is not consistent with the objective statement.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student identifies the sentence containing a specific sentence pattern: N + LV + Adv or (D) + N + LV + Adv. Three answer choices are given, all beginning with the same subject (i.e., the same N or the same (D) + N). The correct answer is a sentence following the specific sentence pattern. Distractors follow two other sentence patterns (with determiner added before the first N, when appropriate, to match the pattern of the correct answer): N + V + N and N + LV + N.

Comments: The distractor sentence patterns are derived from Objectives 46 and 47.

The sentence pattern for Objective 49 (N + LV + Adj.) is not used as a distractor because the distinction between adverbs and adjectives is often difficult to make.

ITEMS

Directions: Which sentence follows the pattern N + LV + Adv?

1. A. Ronnie is king.
   B. Ronnie likes candy
   #C. Ronnie is here.

Directions: Which sentence follows the pattern (D) + N + LV + Adv?

2. A. The girls play baseball.
   #B. The girls are nearby.
   C. The girls are friends.

OBJECTIVE 49

Identify sentence pattern noun, linking verb, adjective (NLVAdj.)

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student identifies basic sentences that consist of a noun (which serves as the subject), a linking verb (which is a form of be), and an adjective (which serves as the complement); e.g.:

N + LV + Adj: Candy is sweet.

An optional determiner (in instruction, an article--a, an, the) may precede the noun; e.g.:

(D) + N + LV + Adj: The candies are sweet.

Comments: Even when the determiner is included in the sentence, it is parenthesized in the labeling.

The instructional guide also includes the pattern (D) + Adj + N + LV + Adj (e.g., The big candies are sweet). However, since this sentence pattern is not consistent with the objective statement, it is not assessed here.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student identifies the sentence containing a specific sentence pattern: N + LV + Adj or (D) + N + LV + Adj. Three answer choices are given, all beginning with the same subject (i.e., with the same N or the same (D) + N). The correct answer is a sentence following the specific sentence pattern. Distractors follow two other sentence patterns (with a determiner added before the first N, when appropriate, to match the pattern of the correct answer): N + V + N and N + V + Adv.

Comment: The distractor sentence pattern N + V + N is derived from Objective 47. The other distractor sentence pattern is not part of the instructional guide, but it is used because it is a common pattern and the sentences parallel the correct answer.

ITEMS

Directions: Which sentence follows the pattern N + LV + Adj?

1. #A. Fires are dangerous.
   B. Fires destroy forests.
   C. Fires burn swiftly.

Directions: Which sentence follows the pattern (D) + N + LV + Adj?

2. A. The audience watched Julie.
   B. The audience clapped loudly.
   #C. The audience was noisy.

OBJECTIVE 50

Apply the rules for using the basic parts of speech as they relate to sentence sense, use, and structure.

Assessment Level: 6B

CONTENT

The en-route objectives that are assessed at earlier levels are covered here. See those objectives for the relevant content.

> Comment: Objectives specified for Levels 1A and 1B are not assessed here because they are too basic to be assessed five years after initial mastery.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

For descriptions of the items included for this review, see objectives assessed at earlier levels.

ITEMS

For example items, see specifications at earlier levels.

TN 2-82/03

SWRL SOUTHWEST REGIONAL LABORATORY
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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART III: SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Ann Humes, Joseph Lawlor, and Larry Gentry

ABSTRACT

The specifications reflect the elementary schooling intentions of a large metropolitan school district. The specifications include content descriptions, item descriptions that detail the construction of appropriate assessment items, and sample items for assessing the objectives.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART III: SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Ann Humes, Joseph Lawlor, and Larry Gentry

Working in collaboration with a large metropolitan school district, SWRL developed assessment instruments for language arts for each semester (A and B) of Levels 1-6 (i.e., grades 1-6) in the district's elementary schools. This paper provides detailed specifications for one large category of objectives in the core curriculum that is described in the district's instructional guide. In the first section of the paper, background for the project is provided. This background includes a discussion of some of the activities SWRL staff engaged in prior to constructing the assessment specifications; it also outlines the types of information and material included in the language-arts specifications. The background is followed by specifications for the objectives in the Sentence Structure category.

BACKGROUND

Presented with a list of language-arts objectives to be assessed by a large metropolitan school district, SWRL responded to the list before writing actual specifications and items. This response pointed out overlaps between reading and language arts objectives and recommended that some objectives be deleted from assessment. These deletions were recommended (1) when objectives were assessed by the same skill at a different semester or by another skill in the specifications, or (2) when the skill did not lend itself to large-scale assessment.

SWRL also described appropriate assessment differences for objectives that had been listed by the district for testing at more than one semester. For some of these objectives, differences in content could be described; for other objectives, assessment could only be differentiated by the type of format or the vocabulary level used in the items. SWRL also commented that some objectives, on the basis of SWRL's analyses of textbook presentation, seemed to be specified for assessment at a grade that might be too early for mastery.

In responding to SWRL's recommendations, the district moved some objectives to higher grades and deleted others. The district also considered many of the differentiations SWRL had proposed for objectives listed for assessment at more than one semester. However, district people ultimately decided not to differentiate between semesters of assessment, but to assess the whole objective for every semester at which that objective was listed.

Specifications and items were then prepared by SWRL staff. The specifications were based primarily on an analysis of the district's instructional guide, together with SWRL's analyses of language-arts textbooks. In some cases, where the statement of the objective was amenable to interpretations other than that described in the guide, special care was taken to insure that resulting assessments would align with the local program, as in the district's guide.

For each assessed objective, complete specifications were provided. These specifications include content descriptions that note factors involved in the use of each objective, including other inherent skills and prerequisite knowledge. Each content description is followed by an item description. The item description explains both the item stimulus and the answer choices. The item description also notes any other important considerations relevant to assessing an objective in the particular item format. At least one sample item is then presented for each objective; more items are included in the case of items that are interrelated by format or content. These sample items are generally those actually used in the assessment instruments, with the following changes made for clarity in this presentation:

1. The correct answer is marked with a number sign (#).
2. Directions are included with each item. In the actual instrument for grades 1 and 2, directions are printed separately for the teacher to read to students; in addition, more specific instructions are provided at the early levels; e.g., "Look at number ___."

Additionally, teachers are encouraged to read (and explain) directions if students do not understand them. Teachers are also permitted to help students if they do not understand how to do a task, so long as the "help" does not cue students directly to the correct response.

The vocabulary used is found in the Harris and Jacobson word list.* The words used for the A-level surveys are generally those listed at two or more grades below the level of assessment. The words for the B-level surveys are those listed for one or more grade levels below. Such vocabulary control helps ensure that reading ability is not a primary factor in determining students' language-arts success.

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*Harris, A. L., & Jacobson, M. D. Basic elementary reading vocabularies. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

The Harris and Jacobson list does not contain a number of technical terms needed for directions (e.g., sentence, paragraph, cursive). Such words were avoided where possible, but using them was necessary in many cases. In some instances the technical terms were used at the district's request, despite the availability of acceptable synonyms.

The assessment specifications are presented below. In general, these specifications are those originally submitted to the district because they are considered the most appropriate match for classroom instruction and student ability.

In addition to the objectives covered in Part III, other areas of language-arts assessment are described in the following documents:

Part I: Listening
Part II: Grammar Usage
Part IV: Capitalization and Punctuation
Part V: Language Expression
Part VI: Spelling
Part VII: Literature
Part VIII: Study Skills, Mass Media, and Nonverbal Communication

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SENTENCE STRUCTURE

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SPECIFICATIONS

OBJECTIVE 1

Order letters to make words.

Assessment Levels: 1A and 1B

CONTENT

The student arranges a given series of letters to spell a word.

> Comment: The ability to generate sound-to-spelling correspondences is prerequisite to this objective. However, the instructional guide does not introduce spelling objectives until grade 3. Consequently, students at this level may find this objective difficult.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

At Level 1A, the stimulus is a picture of a familiar object. The student selects the word that names the pictured object. Distractors are scrambled versions of the correct spelling. The distractors are designed so that they do not represent misspellings of the target word (e.g., *caek* for the target word *cake*). The use of such distractors would make the items inappropriately difficult for students at this level.

At Level 1B, the stimulus is also a picture of a familiar object. The letters that spell the name of the object are displayed (out of sequence) beneath the picture. The letters are printed in over-sized manuscript to facilitate copying by the student. The student arranges the given letters by writing the word on the guidelines. Student responses are rated as not scorable, acceptable, or unacceptable according to the criteria listed in the Scoring Guide.

ITEMS

Level 1A

Directions: Which word is the name of the picture?

1. [picture: cake]

cake	ecka	kcea
#0	0	0

Level 1B

Directions: Look at the picture. Change the order of the letters to make the word that is the name of the picture. Write the word on the blank line.

1. picture: ball

l a l b

*	2	1
0	0	0

SCORING GUIDE

Students' responses are scored according to the following criteria:

* (Not Scorable):	No response is given, or response is illegible; order of the letters cannot be determined.
2 (Acceptable):	All letters are in the correct order.
1 (Unacceptable):	One or more letters are out of order.

OBJECTIVE 2

Order words to make sentences.

Assessment Levels: 1A and 1B

CONTENT

The student recognizes that word order affects the meaning of standard English sentences and that word order can determine whether or not a group of words is actually a sentence. At Level 1A, the student should understand sentences with the following patterns:

(1) subject-verb
(2) subject-verb-direct object

At Level 1B, the student should understand sentences with these additional patterns:

(3) subject-verb-prepositional phrase
(4) subject-linking verb-predicate adjective/noun
(5) subject-verb-adverb

Knowledge of grammatical terms is not prerequisite to this objective, and the student is not required to identify sentence parts.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

A picture stimulus is used to minimize the reading requirement. The student selects the sentence that describes the picture. The correct response is a simple sentence in one of the syntactic orders noted in the Content section above. Distractors are scrambled versions of the word order of the correct responses, and they are clearly not sentences. At these levels, only two answer choices are used so that the reading task does not inappropriately increase the difficulty of the items.

The use of the simple present tense conforms to students' reading abilities at this grade level. Although the present progressive tense would seem more natural (e.g., The dog is eating), students might have difficulty reading some inflected verb forms, e.g., eating.

ITEMS

Level 1A

Directions: Which is a good sentence that tells about the picture?

1. [picture: dog eating]

The eats dog.
0

The dog eats.
#0

Level 1B

Directions: Which is a good sentence that tells about the picture?

1. [picture: boy sitting at a table, eating a piece of cake; on the table is a cake with one piece cut out of it.]

He eats some cake.	Cake some eats he.
/0	0

OBJECTIVE 3

Construct manuscript letters.

Assessment Levels: 1A and 1B

CONTENT

The student copies a manuscript letter from a model. The instructional guide lists the following groupings for manuscript letters:

Lower case

1. a, o, d, g, q, b, p
2. v, w, x, y, z, k
3. i, l, t
4. r, m, n, c, e, f, i, h, u, s

Upper case

1. A, K, M, N, V, W, X, Y, Z
2. B, D, J, P, R, U
3. C, G, O, Q, S
4. E, F, H, I, L, T

At the district's suggestion, lower-case letters are assessed at Level 1A, and upper-case letters are assessed at Level 1B.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

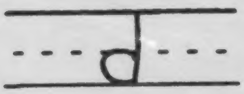
Each item contains a model manuscript letter printed in guidelines 1/2 inch high, with a dotted line in the center. The student copies the letter on similar guidelines. Students' responses are rated according to the criteria listed in the Scoring Guide.

ITEMS

Level 1A

Directions: Copy this letter on the blank lines. Use your best printing.

1.

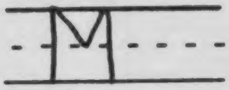


* 3 2 1
0 0 0 0

Level 1B

Directions: Copy this letter on the blank lines. Use your best printing.

1.



* 3 2 1
0 0 0 0

SCORING GUIDE

Students' responses are scored according to the following criteria:

*: no response

3: good letter formation

2: legible, but some problems with letter formation

1: illegible, very difficult to read

OBJECTIVE 4

Demonstrate the ability to make the transition from manuscript to cursive writing.

Assessment Level: 2B

CONTENT

The student copies a transitional cursive letter from a model, maintaining the appropriate size, shape, and slant of the model. According to the district, transitional letters are _i_, _t_, _u_, and _w_.

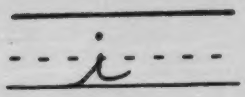
ITEM DESCRIPTION

Each item contains a model cursive letter printed in guidelines 1/2 inch high, with a dotted line in the center. The student copies the model on similar guidelines. Students' responses are rated according to the criteria listed in the Scoring Guide.

ITEM

Directions: Copy this letter on the blank lines. Use good cursive writing.

1.



* 3 2 1
0 0 0 0

SCORING GUIDE

Students' responses are scored according to the following criteria:

- *: no response, or response is written in manuscript
- 3: good letter formation
- 2: legible, but some problems with letter formation
- 1: illegible, very difficult to read

OBJECTIVE 5

Identify the parts of a friendly letter.

Assessment Level: 2B

CONTENT

The student identifies the following parts of a friendly letter:

(1) The heading contains the address of the sender and the month, day, and year in which the letter is written. The heading is located in the upper right-hand corner of the letter, aligned with the middle of the page.

Comment: In actual friendly letters, the sender's address is optional and, if written to someone well known to the sender (e.g., a relative), probably inappropriate.

(2) The greeting consists of Dear and the name of the person to whom the letter is being sent. The greeting is aligned with the left-hand margin, approximately two lines below the heading.

(3) The body contains the message of the letter. The body begins on the first line under the greeting, and paragraphs within the body are indented.

(4) The closing of a friendly letter is usually informal, consisting of Love, Your friend, or Your daughter (or other appropriate relationship). The closing is located two lines below the body of the letter, and it is aligned with the heading.

(5) The signature is the sender's handwritten name. In a friendly letter, the sender's first name is usually sufficient. The signature is located directly under the closing.

Knowledge of the technical names for letter parts (e.g., heading) is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a friendly letter. The parts of the letter are numbered. The student selects the name of the letter part that identifies each numbered section. Distractors are the names of other letter parts.

ITEM

Directions: Read this letter. The parts of the letter have numbers next to them. Use these numbers to answer the questions following the letter. (Teacher reads letter.)

241 Green Street, S.E.
(1) Washington, D.C. 20031
May 12, 1981

(2) Dear Annie,

(3) I have a new pet dog. He can run fast. He can jump, too. Can you come to my house? We can play with my new dog.

(4) Your friend,

(5) Jeff

1. What is part 1 of the letter called?

the greeting	the heading	the closing
0	#0	0

OBJECTIVE 6

Order ideas and principles in logical form.

Assessment Levels: 3A and 3B

CONTENT

The student organizes the content of a given paragraph in chronological (time) order.

> **Comment:** Although the objective statement refers to "ideas and principles," the instructional guide indicates that "events" are the content.

At Level 3A, this objective is relevant to narratives. A narrative presents an experience to an audience, giving the impression of passage in time. The incidents of the narrative are organized in the order of their occurrence. The cohesion of a narrative is dependent upon this appropriate ordering.

At Level 3B, this objective is relevant to informative compositions that explain a procedure. The steps in the procedure are presented in the order in which they must be performed. The cohesion of a procedural explanation is dependent upon this appropriate ordering.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

At Level 3A, the stimulus is the title of a hypothetical story and the three sentences that comprise the story. The student identifies an appropriate sequence of events for the story by determining which is the beginning, middle, and ending sentence. The title is broad enough to encompass the events listed for the story and narrow enough to limit the arrangement of those events.

At Level 3B, the stimulus for the items is a picture of an object with its parts simply and graphically displayed. The steps required to make the object are listed (out of order) beneath the picture. The student identifies the appropriate sequence by determining which is the first, second, and third step in the procedure.

The answer choices are amenable to only one possible sequence. That sequence should be readily evident to students. Transitional expressions that suggest time order are not used in the sentences because students might choose sentences on the basis of the time word rather than on the arrangement of the story or procedure.

Pronouns are not substituted for nouns in any of the sentences in the story for Level 3A (even though this does make the story stylistically awkward). If pronouns (e.g., she) were used, students who recognize the need for pronoun referents could use that knowledge in determining the correct order of the sentences. For example, the sentence "She jumped out of bed" could not be the first sentence in the story because the referent for the pronoun would not have been identified.

At Level 3B, choices A and C include the phrase "in the dish," although this phrase is imprecise. However, exact expressions (i.e., for A, "on the top," and for C, "on the cake") would inappropriately cue the correct answer.

ITEMS

Level 3A

Directions: The sentences in this story are not in the right order. Read the title and the sentences. Then answer the questions that follow the story.

THE HURRY-UP MORNING

A. Judy ran all the way to school.
B. Judy jumped out of bed.
C. Judy got dressed as fast as she could.

1. Which sentence should be first in the story?

A.
#B.
C.

2. Which sentence should be the middle of the story?

A.
B.
#C.

3. Which sentence should be last in the story?

#A.
B.
C.

Level 3B

Directions: Look at this picture of an ice cream treat.

[picture: dish containing a dessert; a piece of pound cake is on the bottom, with a scoop of ice cream on top of it; a cherry is on top of the ice cream]

These are the steps to follow for making the treat. But the steps are not in the right order.

A. Put a cherry in the dish.
B. Put a piece of cake in the dish.
C. Put some ice cream in the dish.

1. Which should you do first?

   A.
  #B.
   C.

2. Which should you do next?

   A.
   B.
  #C.

3. Which should you do last?

  #A.
   B.
   C.

OBJECTIVE 7

Construct cursive letters.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student copies a cursive letter from a model, maintaining the appropriate size, shape, and slant of the model.

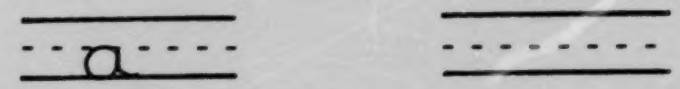
ITEM DESCRIPTION

The item contains a model cursive letter printed in guidelines 1/2 inch high, with a dotted line in the center. The student copies the letter on similar guidelines. Students' responses are rated according to the criteria listed in the Scoring Guide.

ITEM

Directions: Copy this letter on the blank lines. Use good cursive writing.

1.



SCORING GUIDE

Students' responses are rated according to the following criteria:

*: no response, or response is written in manuscript

3: good letter formation

2: legible, but some problems with letter formation

1: illegible, very difficult to read

OBJECTIVE 8

Identify parts of a business letter.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student identifies the following parts of a business letter:

(1) The heading contains the address of the sender and the month, day, and year in which the letter is written. The heading is located in the upper right-hand corner of the letter, aligned with the center of the page.

(2) The inside address contains the name and address of the person to whom the letter is written. The inside address is placed two lines below the heading, and it is aligned with the left margin.

(3) The greeting consists of Dear and the name of the person to whom the letter is being sent. In most business letters, the greeting contains the appropriate personal title (e.g., Ms.) and the person's last name.

(4) The body contains the message of the letter. The body begins two lines below the greeting, and paragraphs within the body are indented.

(5) The closing of a business letter is usually formal, consisting of Sincerely, Yours truly, or Sincerely yours. The closing is located two lines below the body of the letter, and it is aligned with the heading.

(6) The signature is the sender's handwritten name, usually both first and last names. In business letters, the sender's name is also typewritten or printed just below the signature.

Knowledge of the technical names for business letter parts (e.g., inside address) is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a short business letter. The parts of the letter are numbered. The student selects the name of the letter part that identifies each numbered section. Distractors are the names of the other letter parts.

ITEM

Directions: Read this business letter. Parts of the letter have numbers next to them. Use these numbers to answer the question below.

(1) 204 Hill Street
Springfield, IL 62704
May 14, 1981

Ms. Susan Brown
Happy-Time Balloons
(2) 761 Greenway Street, N.E.
Laguna Hills, CA 92675

(3) Dear Ms. Brown:

Please mail me one box of red balloons. I am sending you $2.50 for the balloons. Thank you.

(4) Yours truly,
Joseph Downs
(5) Joseph Downs

1. What is part 1 of the letter called?

#A. the heading
B. the body
C. the inside address

OBJECTIVE 9

Construct a friendly letter.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student writes a friendly letter, using the appropriate format. The following parts are included in the letter:

(1) The heading contains the address of the sender and the month, day, and year in which the letter is written. The heading is located in the upper right-hand corner of the letter, aligned with the middle of the page.

Comment: In actual friendly letters, the sender's address is optional and, if written to someone well known to the sender (e.g., a relative), probably inappropriate.

(2) The greeting consists of Dear and the name of the person to whom the letter is being sent. The greeting is aligned with the left-hand margin, approximately two lines below the heading.

(3) The body contains the message of the letter. The body begins on the first line under the greeting, and paragraphs within the body are indented. The content of the body generally describes interesting experiences of the writer.

(4) The closing of a friendly letter is usually informal, consisting of Love, Your friend, or Your daughter (or other appropriate relationship). The closing is located two lines below the body of the letter, and it is aligned with the heading.

(5) The signature is the sender's handwritten name. In a friendly letter, the sender's first name is usually sufficient. The signature is located directly under the closing.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Using narrative-writing skills, the student writes a straightline narrative in the format of a friendly letter. The writing prompt directs the student to write a letter to a friend, describing an experience common to all students.

Student's responses are rated according to the criteria listed in the scoring key. Teachers first determine whether or not the student's response can be scored (e.g., responses rated as illegible or off- topic receive no further scoring). If the response can be scored, the teacher then rates each of the criteria listed in the key. The Scoring Guide describes what constitutes a rating of good, acceptable, or unacceptable on each criterion in the Scoring Key.

ITEM

Directions: Write a letter to a friend. Tell your friend about the day you started to school for the first time.

- Write about at least three things that happened to you.
- Tell about the things in the order that they happened.
- Be sure to include all the parts of a friendly letter and put them in the right place on the page.
- Use your own address and today's date.
- Be sure to capitalize and punctuate the letter correctly.

SCORING KEY

1. Mark one of the following:

A.: Student's response is illegible (no further scoring
0 required).

B.: Student's response is not relevant to the prompt (no
0 further scoring required).

C.: Student did not respond at all (no further scoring
0 required).

D.: Student's response can be scored (see criteria below).
0

Scoring Criteria	Good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
CONTENT:			
2. Includes three or more events.	0	0	0
3. Arranges events in chronological order.	0	0	0
FORMAT:			
4. Includes the parts of a friendly letter.	0	0	0
5. Places letter parts correctly.	0	0	0
FORM:			
6. Indents first word of paragraph(s) in the body of the letter.	0		0

Comment: The "indents first word" criterion has only good and unacceptable ratings because a student either does or does not indent.

Scoring Criteria	Good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
7. Uses margins.	0	0	0
8. Capitalizes correctly.	0	0	0
9. Punctuates correctly.	0	0	0
10. Spells correctly.	0	0	0
11. Writes legibly.	0	0	0

SCORING GUIDE

CONTENT:

2. Includes three or more events.

Good: Three or more events are included.

Acceptable: Two events are included.

Unacceptable: One or no event is included.

3. Arranges events in chronological order.

Good: The events are arranged in chronological order.

Acceptable: One event is out of order.

Unacceptable: Events are not appropriately ordered.

Comment: If only one or no event is included, score this criterion as unacceptable.

FORMAT:

4. Includes the parts of a friendly letter (i.e., address, date, greeting, body, closing, signature; for scoring this criterion, ignore proper placement--see criterion below).

Good: All or most letter parts are included.

Acceptable: Some letter parts are included.

Unacceptable: Few or no letter parts are included so that the product is not recognizable as a letter.

5. Places letter parts correctly (see parts above).

Good: All or most letter parts are placed correctly.

Acceptable: Some letter parts are placed correctly.

Unacceptable: Few or no letter parts are placed correctly.

Comment: Score this criterion as unacceptable if no letter parts are included.

FORM:

6. Indents first word of paragraph(s) in the body of the letter.

Good:	The first word of the body is indented.
Unacceptable:	The first word of the body is not indented.

7. Uses margins.

Good:	Margins are evident on both sides of the paper.
Acceptable:	A margin is evident on one side of the paper.
Unacceptable:	No margins are evident.

8. Capitalizes correctly (i.e., first word of sentence, names of persons, names of months, days, streets, cities, states, greeting, and closing).

Good:	The letter has few or no capitalization errors.
Acceptable:	The letter has some capitalization errors.
Unacceptable:	The letter has many capitalization errors.

9. Punctuates correctly (i.e., commas following greeting and closing; commas in address and date; periods at end of sentences).

Good:	The letter has few or no punctuation errors.
Acceptable:	The letter has some punctuation errors.
Unacceptable:	The letter has many punctuation errors.

10. Spells correctly.

Good:	Most words are spelled correctly.
Acceptable:	Several different words are misspelled.
Unacceptable:	Many different words are misspelled.
Comment:	The ratings refer to "different words." If the student misspells the same word more than once, count it as one misspelling.

11. Writes legibly.

Good:	All words are readable.
Acceptable:	Most words are readable, and unreadable words do not interfere with comprehension of content.
Unacceptable:	Many words are unreadable so that content is difficult to read.

OBJECTIVE 10

Apply the rule for addressing envelopes.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student places the address and return address (name, street address, city, state, and zip code) on an envelope correctly. The student must know the order of the address parts (name followed by street address, then by city, state, and zip code) and the location of each type of address.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

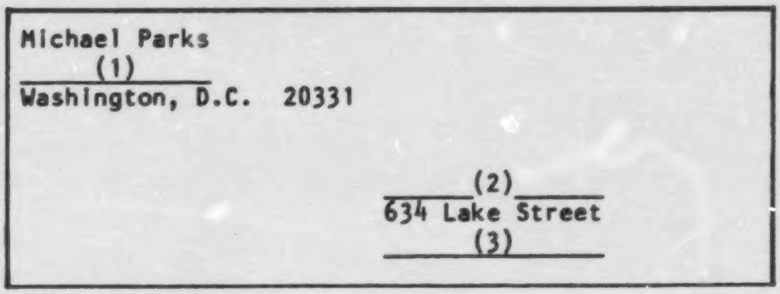
The stimulus is a picture of an envelope with blank lines where address elements belong. The blank lines are numbered. The student selects the address part--a street address (item 1), a name (item 2), and a city, state, and zip code (item 3)--that should be placed on each numbered line.

All distractors are the address parts described above. The answer choices are the same for all three items. Since each choice is the correct response for one item and a distractor for two other items, no additional distractors are added.

Distractors are ordered the same in each item because changing the order of the distractors is confusing and serves no useful purpose.

ITEMS

Directions: This envelope has some missing parts.



Michael Parks
(1)
Washington, D.C. 20331

(2)
634 Lake Street
(3)

1. Which part goes on line 1?

   A. Fullerton, CA 92631
   B. Ms. Emily Bridges
   ✓C. 1700 Crossfield Street

2. Which part goes on line 2?

   A. Fullerton, CA 92631
   #B. Ms. Emily Bridges
   C. 1700 Crossfield Street, N.W.

3. Which part goes on line 3?

   #A. Fullerton, CA 92631
   B. Ms. Emily Bridges
   C. 1700 Crossfield Street, N.W.

OBJECTIVE 11

Distinguish basic sentences from fragments and run-on sentences.

Assessment Levels: 4A and 4B

CONTENT

At Level 4A, the student, understanding sentences as word groups that contain a subject and predicate, distinguishes sentences from fragments. Fragments are incomplete sentences that may be missing a subject or predicate, or they may be subordinate clauses that have been improperly separated from the independent clauses that they modify (e.g., We stopped at a restaurant. Because we were hungry.).

At Level 4B, the student identifies run-on sentences as two independent clauses that are improperly joined without a conjunction. Run-on sentences can appear with or without a comma (e.g., The children swam in the pool, they had a wonderful time/That is not your coat it is mine). Run-on sentences are usually the result of an error in the coordination or subordination of clauses.

Although the terms run-on sentence and comma splice are often used to describe the faulty sentence construction, students need not be familiar with the technical meaning of these terms.

Comments: Identification of sentence fragments and run-on sentences is an important component skill of the proofreading/editing process. Students are usually required to identify (and correct) fragments in their own compositions before preparing the final written products.

This objective may be difficult for students because sentence fragments are frequently used in informal conversation with little or no negative effect on the communication process. Therefore, students may have problems understanding why written language requires the use of grammatically complete sentences, particularly since some fragments do appear in prose (e.g., in written dialogue).

ITEM DESCRIPTION

At Level 4A, the stimulus consists of four contextually related lines; three lines are complete sentences, and one is a sentence fragment. The student identifies the line that is a fragment. The directions for the item do not include the word fragment. The less technical label "complete sentence" is used rather than the term "fragment" so that students at this level are assessed on their knowledge of sentences rather than their knowledge of technical terms.

The items illustrate two common sentence-fragment errors:

1) The fragment in item 1 (choice A) is a prepositional phrase and its modifiers. Students are often able to identify a single prepositional phrase as a fragment, but they may assume that the additional detail provided by a second phrase (here a participial phrase) makes a complete sentence.

2) The fragment in item 2 (choice C) is a verbal phrase containing a present participle (-ing) form. Here students may assume that the verbal is the predicate of the sentence. In addition, the verbal may appear to be a gerund, making the entire construction appear to be a noun phrase. This suggests a semantic unity that students may interpret as a complete sentence.

Other structures commonly written as fragments include subordinate adverbial clauses (e.g., Because he was cold), infinitive phrases (e.g., To keep dry in the rain), and relative clauses (e.g., Who were camping in the park). However, the two items provided here assess an appropriate range and difficulty for this grade level.

At Level 4B, the student is presented with three related sentences from which to select the one that is a run-on sentence. Item directions do not include either the technical term "run-on sentence" or the abstract expression "complete thought." Rather, the directions for the item are written so that students at this level are assessed on their knowledge of sentences rather than on their knowledge of technical or abstract terminology. The correct responses represent two common types of run-on sentences that are often generated when it or then introduces the second clause. The distractors for these items also contain two clauses, but they are grammatically correct. One choice is a compound sentence joined by a coordinate conjunction (choice B in item 1 and choice C in item 2). The other choice is a complex sentence (choice C in item 1 and choice A in item 2). The subordinate clause in this second type of distractor is placed in the initial position so that a comma is used to separate the clauses. This allows the distractor to be physically similar to the other choices.

ITEMS

Level 4A

Directions: The three lines tell a story. Which line is not a complete sentence?

1. #A. With the yellow sun looking down on us.
   B. We filled a box with good things to eat.
   C. Then we went off on our picnic.

2. A. The sleepy little bird went flying in the air.
   B. It stopped in a big tree.
   #C. Soon falling asleep in its leaves.

Level 4B

Directions: The three sentences tell a story. One sentence is wrong because it is really two sentences joined together incorrectly. Which sentence is not correct?

1. #A. The mouse was not in the trap, it did not get caught.
   B. The mouse ate the food, but then it ran away.
   C. Because the mouse was full, it went to sleep in its nest.

2. A. When Annie had her birthday, we gave her a party.
   #B. First we ate our dinner, then we had cake.
   C. We played games, and then we sang songs.

OBJECTIVE 12

Apply the rule for proofreading.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student reads composed text and finds and corrects any error(s). Proofreading is an extremely important skill in the preparation of final written documents. The student should be able to find and correct errors derived from those writing objectives taught and assessed at earlier grade levels; e.g., at Level 4, students may be required to proofread for capitalization of proper nouns (a Level 3 objective), but not be required to proofread for capitalization of proper adjectives (a Level 5 objective).

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus for the items is a paragraph containing five errors. These errors are derived from objectives that are listed for the sections on Capitalization, Punctuation, Language Expression, and Spelling and that are taught and assessed at grades 1, 2, and 3.

Students are to cross out each error in the paragraph. They then write the corrections above the crossed-out errors. Students' responses are rated according to the criteria listed in the Scoring Guide.

ITEMS

Directions: Read this paragraph very carefully. There are five mistakes in the paragraph. When you find a mistake, cross it out. Then write the correction above the mistake.

Remember, there are five mistakes in the paragraph.

Have you ever lived on a farm. Last summer, I stay at my friend's farm in Maryland. every morning, I helped my friend milk the cows. I helped her feed the chickens, to. Then I went horseback rideing.

SCORING GUIDE

Students are to identify and correct the five errors in the paragraph. The paragraph is shown below with the proper corrections inserted.

Each correction is numbered to correspond to an item scored by the teacher on the answer sheet.

?(1)
Have you ever lived on a farm~~.~~ Last summer, I

stayed (2)   E(3)
~~stay~~ at my friend's farm in Maryland. ~~e~~very morning,

I helped my friend milk the cows. I helped her feed

too(4)   riding(5)
the chickens, ~~to~~. Then I went horseback ri~~de~~ing.

Score each item (1-5) according to the criteria listed below:

3: Student identifies and corrects the error.

2: Student identifies the error but does not correct it appropriately.

1: Student neither identifies nor corrects the error.

OBJECTIVE 13

Identify the parts of a book report.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student identifies the parts of a book report, which, in the instructional guide, include the title of the book, the author's name, an interesting or exciting episode from the book, the characters' names, and an evaluation of the book as one to be recommended or not recommended to classmates.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a paragraph with all the above listed elements of a book report. The student reads the book report and answers questions about that report. The questions ask for identification of the parts of a book report. The correct answer for each item is a proper name. The distractors are other proper names in the book report. Proper nouns are used as distractors so that students do not guess the correct answer on the basis of capitalization.

ITEMS

Directions: Read this book report. Then answer the questions.

The name of the book I read is A Trip to the Hills. J. D. Sands wrote this book. The two people in this book are Timothy and Sharon. The best part of the book is the story about finding the gold. I think anyone who likes exciting stories will like this book.

1. Which is the title of the book?

#A. A Trip to the Hills
B. J. D. Sands
C. Timothy and Sharon

2. Who is the author of the book?

#A. J. D. Sands
B. Sharon
C. Timothy

OBJECTIVE 14

Identify clauses.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student identifies subordinate clauses. Although main clauses and subordinate clauses both have a subject and predicate, a subordinate clause must be a component of a larger syntactic unit, a sentence. A main clause is an independent construction that can stand alone as a sentence. A subordinate clause is a part of a sentence that functions like a noun, an adjective, or an adverb.

> Comment: Although the objective refers to clauses, the instructional guide covers only subordinate clauses. Furthermore, only adjective clauses are covered (adverbial clauses are assessed for another area of objectives).

Two types of subordinate clauses are presented in instruction:

(1) Subordinate adjective clauses, often called relative clauses, modify nouns and pronouns within a main clause (e.g., The girl who won the contest was very happy). Adjective clauses are often introduced by a relative pronoun (e.g., that, who).

(2) Subordinate adverb clauses modify verbs or main clauses (e.g., We cancelled the picnic because the weather turned rainy: clause modifies cancelled; They will leave when their money runs out: clause modifies the main clause). Adverb clauses are introduced by a subordinating conjunction (e.g., after, because).

This objective does not require the student to identify either the function or the type of subordinate clause. The student is only required to identify sentences that have subordinate clauses.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The directions ask students to identify the sentence that has a clause as "part of the sentence." This wording focuses students' attention on the subordinate clause, yet does not require students to understand the term "subordinate."

The stimulus consists of three sentences, each an answer choice. One distractor is a simple sentence consisting of subject, verb, and object. Another distractor is a simple sentence expanded with a prepositional phrase. The correct answer is the same simple sentence expanded with a subordinate clause. Using the same kernel sentence in each answer choice focuses students' attention away from the main clause. This practice precludes making a student discriminate between a main and a subordinate clause.

ITEM

Directions: Which has a clause as part of the sentence?

1. A. The children saw the teacher.
   B. The children saw the teacher in the room.
   #C. The children saw the teacher who told the story.

OBJECTIVE 15

Construct a letter of invitation.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student incoporates the content of an invitation into the format of a friendly letter. The student includes the date, time, and place of the event, as well as a polite request to attend the event. For a description of the parts of a friendly letter, see the specifications for Objective 5 (Identify the parts of a friendly letter) at Level 2B, and Objective 9 (Construct a friendly letter) at Level 3B.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student writes an invitation in the form of a friendly letter. The student's invitation is to include information on what, where, and when elements. This information is given in the prompt.

Students' responses are rated according to the criteria listed in the Scoring Key. Teachers first determine whether or not the student's response can be scored (e.g., responses rated as illegible or off-topic receive no further scoring). If the response can be scored, the teacher then rates each of the criteria listed in the key. The Scoring Guide describes what constitutes a rating of good, acceptable, or unacceptable on each criterion in the Scoring Key.

ITEM

Directions: Write a letter to a friend. Invite your friend to a birthday party and picnic to be held on Saturday, June 13. The party will be at Rock Creek Park. It will start at eleven o'clock in the morning at picnic grove number 3.

- Be sure to tell your friend about the birthday party and picnic.
- Be sure to tell when and where the party will be held, and ask your friend to come.
- Be sure to include all the parts of a friendly letter and put them in the right place on the page.
- Use your own address and today's date.
- Be sure to capitalize and punctuate correctly.

SCORING KEY

1. Mark one of the following:

A.: Student's response is illegible (no further scoring required).
0

B.: Student's response is not relevant to the prompt (no further scoring required).
0

C.: Student did not respond at all (no further scoring required).
0

D.: Student's response can be scored (see criteria below).
0

Scoring Criteria	Good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
CONTENT:			
2. Includes information on what content.	0	0	0
3. Includes information on when content.	0	0	0
4. Includes information on where content.	0	0	0
5. Includes request.	0		0

Comment: The "includes request" criterion has only good and unacceptable ratings because a student either does or does not include a stated request.

Scoring Criteria	Good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
FORMAT:			
6. Includes parts of a friendly letter.	0	0	0
7. Places letter parts correctly.	0	0	0
FORM:			
8. Punctuates correctly.	0	0	0
9. Capitalizes correctly.	0	0	0
10. Spells correctly.	0	0	0

SCORING GUIDE

CONTENT:

2. Includes information on what.

Good:	Both party and picnic are mentioned.
Acceptable:	Only the party or the picnic is mentioned.
Unacceptable:	Neither party nor picnic is mentioned.

3. Includes information on when.

Good:	Both time and date are included.
Acceptable:	Only time or date is included.
Unacceptable:	Neither time nor date is mentioned.

4. Includes information on where.

Good:	Both Rock Creek Park and picnic grove number 3 are mentioned.
Acceptable:	Either Rock Creek Park or picnic grove number 3 is mentioned.
Unacceptable:	Neither Rock Creek Park nor picnic grove number 3 is mentioned.

5. Includes request.

Good:	The request is stated (e.g., "Please come to a birthday party . . .").
Unacceptable:	The request is not stated.

FORMAT:

6. Includes parts of a friendly letter (i.e., heading, greeting, body, complimentary closing, signature; for scoring this criterion, ignore proper placement--see criterion below).

Good: All or most letter parts are included.

Acceptable: Some letter parts are included.

Unacceptable: Few or no letter parts are included.

7. Places letter parts correctly (see parts above).

Good: All or most letter parts are placed correctly.

Acceptable: Some letter parts are placed correctly.

Unacceptable: Few or no letter parts are placed correctly, or no letter parts are included.

FORM:

8. Capitalizes correctly (i.e., names of persons; first word of sentence; names of months, days, streets, cities; greeting and closings).

Good: The letter has few or no capitalization errors.

Acceptable: The letter has some capitalization errors.

Unacceptable: The letter has many capitalization errors.

9. Punctuates correctly (i.e., comma following greeting and complimentary closing, comma in address and dates, periods at ends of sentences).

Good: The letter has few or no punctuation errors.

Acceptable: The letter has some punctuation errors.

Unacceptable: The letter has many punctuation errors.

10. Spells correctly.

Good: Most words are spelled correctly.

Acceptable: Several different words are misspelled.

Unacceptable: Many different words are misspelled.

Comment: The ratings refer to "different words." If the student misspells the same word more than once, count it as one misspelling.

OBJECTIVE 16

Identify a topic sentence.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student identifies a sentence that states the main idea of a paragraph. Other sentences in the paragraph elaborate on that single sentence; they can be subsumed under that sentence, given an outline form of the paragraph. Thus the scope of the sentence is broad enough to encompass all supporting sentences/ideas, yet specific enough to limit the paragraph to one main idea.

Knowledge of the term topic sentence is prerequisite to this objective.

> Comment: Many professional writers do not include topic sentences in all paragraphs. Furthermore, topic sentences are probably more common in persuasive and expository writing; they are less common in narrative and descriptive writing.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a paragraph with a topic sentence and three supporting sentences. The topic sentence is the first sentence (item 1) or the last sentence (item 2). The first line of the stimulus is indented so that it reflects the paragraph format.

Since topic sentences are most relevant to informative writing, the paragraph is an example of informative prose.

The paragraph has three supporting sentences. All supporting sentences in the stimulus relate to one relatively simple concept. Both the main idea, which is presented in the topic sentence, and the supporting ideas of the paragraph are simple enough that the task does not require focusing on the content to understand the task. Neither do students need special prior factual knowledge to comprehend the paragraph.

The distractors are other sentences in the paragraph. The choices are presented in the same order as they appear in the paragraph.

> Comment: A task more closely assessing writing ability would require students to select a sentence that could be added to a paragraph as the topic sentence. However, that item type would not match the objective as presented in instruction.

ITEMS

Directions: Read the paragraph. Which sentence is the topic sentence of the paragraph?

1. Some animals are important to people in different ways. Dogs are important as pets. Chickens lay eggs. Cows give us milk to drink. Even spiders are useful because they kill harmful insects.

   #A. Some animals are important to people in different ways.
   B. Dogs are important as pets.
   C. Even spiders are useful because they kill harmful insects.

2. Long ago, people in our country lived in caves. Some of the people who came later lived in tents. Early settlers built cabins for homes. A few people have even built small castles to live in. This shows that many things have served as homes in our land.

   A. Long ago, people in our country lived in caves.
   B. Early settlers built cabins for homes.
   #C. This shows that many things have served as homes in our land.

OBJECTIVE 17

Construct a paragraph using topic sentences and supporting sentences.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student writes a topic sentence that states the main idea of a paragraph. Supporting sentences in the paragraph elaborate on the topic sentence; they can be subsumed under that sentence, given an outline form of the paragraph. Thus the scope of the topic sentence is broad enough to encompass all supporting sentences, yet specific enough to limit the paragraph to one main idea.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student writes a paragraph that describes a specific object or entity. The stimulus directs the student to use specific descriptive terms and to include a topic sentence in the paragraph. The prompt also tells the student to describe particular sensory characteristics of the object or entity. Thus these descriptive details are the supporting statements for the topic sentence.

Students' responses are rated according to the criteria listed in the Scoring Key. Teachers first determine whether or not the student's response can be scored (e.g., responses rated as illegible or off-topic receive no further scoring). If the response can be scored, the teacher then rates each of the criteria listed in the key. The Scoring Guide describes what constitutes a rating of good, acceptable, or unacceptable on each criterion in the Scoring Key.

ITEM

Directions: Write a paragraph that tells about your favorite food. Use exact words so that someone who has not eaten this food can tell what it is like.

- Be sure to write a topic sentence in your paragraph.
- Tell what your favorite food looks like.
- Tell how the food smells.
- Tell how the food tastes.
- Use good grammar and language.

- Write complete sentences.
- Capitalize and punctuate correctly.

SCORING KEY

1. Mark one of the following:

A.: Student's response is illegible (no further scoring required).
0

B.: Student's response is not relevant to the prompt (no further scoring required).
0

C.: Student did not respond at all (no further scoring required).
0

D.: Student's response can be scored (see criteria below).
0

Scoring Criteria	Good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
CONTENT:			
2. Includes a topic sentence.	0	0	0
3. Describes appearance.	0	0	0
4. Describes aroma.	0	0	0
5. Describes taste.	0	0	0
FORM:			
6. Uses correct grammar and complete sentences.	0	0	0
7. Punctuates and capitalizes correctly.	0	0	0
8. Spells correctly.	0	0	0

SCORING GUIDE

CONTENT

2. Includes a topic sentence.

Good:	A topic sentence is included (e.g., "My favorite food is pizza").
Acceptable:	A beginning sentence is included (e.g., "A pizza has tomato sauce and cheese on it").
Unacceptable:	No coherent beginning sentence is evident.

3. Describes appearance.

Good:	The appearance of the food is described with some exact sensory words (e.g., "thick tomato sauce").
Acceptable:	The appearance of the food is described with general words (e.g., "red stuff").
Unacceptable:	The appearance of the food is not described.

4. Describes aroma.

Good:	The aroma of the food is described with some exact sensory words (e.g., "tangy").
Acceptable:	The aroma of the food is described with general words (e.g., "good").
Unacceptable:	The aroma of the food is not described.

5. Describes taste.

Good:	The taste of the food is described with some exact sensory words (e.g., "spicy").
Acceptable:	The taste of the food is described with general words (e.g., "good").
Unacceptable:	The taste of the food is not described.

FORM:

6. Uses correct grammar and complete sentences.

Good:	The composition has few or no grammatical errors, and all sentences are complete.
Acceptable:	The composition has some grammatical errors, and most sentences are complete.
Unacceptable:	The composition has many grammatical errors, and many sentences are fragments and/or run-ons.

7. Punctuates and capitalizes correctly.

Good:	The composition has few or no errors.
Acceptable:	The composition has some errors.
Unacceptable:	The composition has many errors.

8. Spells correctly.

Good:	Most words are spelled correctly.
Acceptable:	Several different words are misspelled.
Unacceptable:	Many different words are misspelled.
Comment:	The ratings refer to "different words." If the student misspells the same word more than once, count it as one misspelling.

OBJECTIVE 18

Apply the rules for completing information on a variety of forms.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student fills in the following personal information on a form: name, address, city, state, area code, telephone number, signature, school, and teacher.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sample form. The student fills in his or her name, street address, city, state, school, and teacher.

Students' responses are rated according to the criteria listed in the Scoring Key. The teacher rates each of the criteria listed in the key. The Scoring Guide describes what constitutes a rating of good, acceptable, or unacceptable on each criterion in the Scoring Key.

ITEM

Directions: Fill in your name, home address, school, and teacher on this form.

1. NAME ______________________________
(Last) (First)

2. HOME ADDRESS ______________________________

3. CITY ________________ STATE ________

4. SCHOOL ________________ TEACHER ________

SCORING KEY

Scoring Criteria	Good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
1. Includes information on line 1.	0	0	0
2. Includes information on line 2.	0	0	0
3. Includes information on line 3.	0	0	0
4. Includes information on line 4.	0	0	0

Comment: Scores should not be lowered for readable misspelled words.

SCORING GUIDE

1. Includes information on line 1. (name)

Good:	Last name and first name are listed in reverse order.
Acceptable:	Names are listed, but not in the correct order.
Unacceptable:	First or last name is omitted, or the information is not correct.

2. Includes information on line 2. (address)

Good:	Number and street address are listed in order.
Acceptable:	Either number or street is included, or number and street are not in the correct order.
Unacceptable:	Number and street are omitted, or the information is not correct.

3. Includes information on line 3. (city, state)

Good:	Both city and state are included.
Acceptable:	Either city or state is included.
Unacceptable:	Neither city nor state is included, or the information is not correct.

4. Includes information on line 4. (school, teacher)

Good:	School and teacher are included.
Acceptable:	Either school or teacher is included.
Unacceptable:	No information is included, or the information is not correct.

OBJECTIVE 19

Construct two unified paragraphs.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student writes two or more paragraphs. The student understands that a paragraph is a physical division in a composition. A paragraph is composed of a series of sentences pertaining to a single topic. The student also understands that, in most school-writing situations (and particularly in formal writing assignments), paragraphs are indented.

Although the "proper" division of a composition into paragraphs is subject to a variety of interpretations by composition authorities, students at this level should recognize that the clearly defined sub-topics (e.g., friendly letters, business letters) of a general topic (e.g., letters) can be treated as separate paragraphs.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Using expository writing skills, the student writes a two-paragraph essay. The writing prompt directs the student to write two paragraphs, with each paragraph containing a specific type of information.

Students' responses are rated according to the criteria listed in the Scoring Key. Teachers first determine whether or not the student's response can be scored (e.g., responses rated as illegible or off-topic receive no further scoring). If the response can be scored, the teacher then rates each of the criteria listed in the key. The Scoring Guide describes what constitutes a rating of good, acceptable, or unacceptable on each criterion in the Scoring Key.

ITEM

Directions: Write two paragraphs that explain why people write different kinds of letters. One paragraph should give some reasons for writing friendly letters. The other paragraph should give some reasons for writing business letters.

- Write two paragraphs.
- Give at least two reasons why people write friendly letters.
- Give at least two reasons why people write business letters.
- Use good grammar and language.

- Write complete sentences.
- Be sure to capitalize and punctuate correctly.

SCORING KEY

1. Mark one of the following:

A.: Student's response is illegible (no further scoring required).
0

B.: Student's response is not relevant to the prompt (no further scoring required).
0

C.: Student did not respond at all (no further scoring required).
0

D.: Student's response can be scored (see criteria below).
0

Scoring Criteria	Good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
CONTENT:			
2. Includes two (or more) paragraphs.	0		0
3. Includes reasons for writing friendly letters.	0	0	0
4. Includes reasons for writing business letters.	0	0	0
5. Organizes content of paragraphs logically.	0	0	0

Comment: The "includes two (or more) paragraphs" criterion has only good and unacceptable ratings because the student either does or does not write more than one paragraph.

FORM:

6. Uses correct grammar and complete sentences.	0	0	0
7. Capitalizes and punctuates correctly.	0	0	0
8. Spells correctly.	0	0	0

SCORING GUIDE

CONTENT:

2. Includes paragraphs.

Good: Two (or more) paragraphs are included.

Unacceptable: One paragraph is included.

3. Includes reasons for writing friendly letters.

Good: Two or more reasons for writing friendly letters are included.

Acceptable: One reason for writing friendly letters is included.

Unacceptable: No reason for writing friendly letters is included.

4. Includes reasons for writing business letters.

Good: Two or more reasons for writing business letters are included.

Acceptable: One reason for writing business letters is included.

Unacceptable: No reason for writing business letters is included.

5. Organizes content of paragraphs logically.

Good: All of the information about friendly letters is in one paragraph, and all of the information about business letters is in the other.

Acceptable: Some of the information about friendly letters in contained in the paragraph about business letters or vice versa.

Unacceptable: The information about friendly letters and business letters is so mixed that the paragraphs do not follow any logical structure.

FORM:

6. Uses correct grammar and complete sentences.

Good: There are few or no grammatical errors and most sentences are complete.

Acceptable: There are some grammatical errors, and some sentences are complete.

Unacceptable: There are many grammatical errors, and few sentences are complete.

7. Capitalizes and punctuates correctly.

Good: The composition has few or no errors.

Acceptable: The composition has some errors.

Unacceptable: The composition has many errors.

8. Spells correctly.

Good: Most words are spelled correctly.

Acceptable: Several different words are misspelled.

Unacceptable: Many different words are misspelled.

Comment: The ratings refer to "different words." If the student misspells the same word more than once, count it as one misspelling.

OBJECTIVE 20

Apply the rules for constructing sentences and paragraphs.

Assessment Level: 6B

CONTENT

The student writes a business letter, including the appropriate content and using format objectives for business letters. The following are the specific objectives relevant to this task at this grade level:

Objective 8: Identify the parts of a business letter.

Objective 17: Construct a paragraph using topic sentences and supporting sentences.

See these individual objectives for their descriptions.

> Comment: A business letter is used to assess this objective because of the emphasis that instruction places on letter-writing skills. Instruction in other types of discourse (e.g., persuasive) does not provide a sufficient number of content objectives for appropriate assessment.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Using expository-writing and letter-writing skills, the student writes a business letter. The stimulus is an advertisement. This prompt and the directions provide all the information needed to write the business letter so that it includes the appropriate content and is written in correct letter format. An advertisement is an especially satisfactory stimulus because it entails less discourse for students to read while still providing all the elements required for the letter. A shorter stimulus is also facilitated by asking students to use their own address and "today's" date.

The personal title of the receiver of the letter is included in the stimulus so that students need not make judgements about which title is appropriate (e.g., Ms./Mrs./Miss).

Students' responses are rated according to the criteria listed in the Scoring Key. Teachers first determine whether or not the student's response can be scored (e.g., responses rated as illegible or off-topic receive no further scoring). If the response can be scored, the teacher then rates each of the criteria listed in the key. The Scoring Guide describes what constitutes a rating of good, acceptable, or unacceptable on each criterion in the Scoring Key.

ITEM

Directions: Read the following magazine advertisement.

> picture: magician pulling rabbit out of hat.
>
> HAVE FUN!
>
> AMAZE YOUR FRIENDS!
>
> LEARN HOW TO DO MAGIC TRICKS!
>
> Send for our new book, Easy Magic. The same tricks are on our record, also called Easy Magic. To order either the book or the record, send a check or money order for $2.00 to Mr. Paul Tinker, E-Z Magic Company, 200 Main Street, Lakeside, Ohio 43600.

Write a business letter asking for either the book or the record.

- Be sure to include all of the important information.
- Use language that is correct for a business letter, including exact words like book or record instead of thing.
- Be sure to tell the name of the book or record.
- Tell that you are sending the money with the letter.
- Include all of the parts of a business letter and put them in the right place on the page.
- Use your own address and today's date.

SCORING KEY

1. Mark one of the following:

A.: Student's response is illegible (no further scoring required).
○

B.: Student's response is not relevant to the prompt (no further scoring required).
○

C.: Student did not respond at all (no further scoring required).
○

D.: Student's response can be scored (see criteria below).
○

Scoring Criteria	Good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
CONTENT:			
2. Includes important information in body of letter.	○	○	○
3. Uses precise language.	○	○	○
FORMAT:			
4. Includes parts of a business letter.	○	○	○
5. Places letter parts correctly.	○	○	○
FORM:			
6. Uses correct grammar and complete sentences.	○	○	○
7. Capitalizes correctly.	○	○	○
8. Punctuates correctly.	○	○	○
9. Spells correctly.	○	○	○

SCORING GUIDE

CONTENT:

2. Includes important information in body of letter (i.e., advertisement, request, name of book or record, money).

Good:	All important information is included.
Acceptable:	Most important information is included.
Unacceptable:	Much important information is not included.

3. Uses precise language (e.g., states explicitly book or record and either money order or check).

Good:	Precise words are used.
Acceptable:	Vague wording is used.
Unacceptable:	Language does not explain request.

FORMAT:

4. Includes parts of a business letter (i.e., heading, inside address, greeting, body, closing, signature; for scoring this criterion, ignore proper placement--see criterion below).

Good:	All or most letter parts are included.
Acceptable:	Some letter parts are included.
Unacceptable:	Few or no letter parts are included.

5. Places letter parts correctly.

Good:	All or most letter parts are placed correctly.
Acceptable:	Some letter parts are placed correctly.
Unacceptable:	Few or no letter parts are placed correctly, or no letter parts are included.

FORM:

6. Uses correct grammar and complete sentences.

Good:	The letter has few or no grammatical errors, and all sentences are complete.
Acceptable:	The letter has some grammatical errors, and most sentences are complete.
Unacceptable:	The letter has many grammatical errors, and many sentences are fragments and/or run-ons.

7. Capitalizes correctly (including capitalization of letter parts).

Good:	The letter has few or no capitalization errors.
Acceptable:	The letter has some capitalization errors.
Unacceptable:	The letter has many capitalization errors.

8. Punctuates correctly (including punctuation of letter parts).

Good:	The letter has few or no punctuation errors.
Acceptable:	The letter has some punctuation errors.
Unacceptable:	The letter has many punctuation errors.

9. Spells correctly.

Good:	Most words are spelled correctly.
Acceptable:	Several different words are misspelled.
Unacceptable:	Many different words are misspelled.
Comment:	The ratings refer to "different words." If the student misspells the same word more than once, count it as one misspelling.

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL LABORATORY
TECHNICAL NOTE

DATE: January 1, 1982
NO: 2-82/04

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART IV: CAPITALIZATION AND PUNCTUATION

Joseph Lawlor, Bruce Cronnell, and Ann Humes

ABSTRACT

The specifications reflect the elementary schooling intentions of a large metropolitan school district. The specifications include content descriptions, item descriptions that detail the construction of appropriate assessment items, and sample items for assessing the objectives.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART IV: CAPITALIZATION AND PUNCTUATION

Joseph Lawlor, Bruce Cronnell, and Ann Humes

Working in collaboration with a large metropolitan school district, SWRL developed assessment instruments for language arts for each semester (A and B) of Levels 1-6 (i.e., grades 1-6) in the district's elementary schools. This paper provides detailed specifications for one large category of objectives in the core curriculum that is described in the district's instructional guide. In the first section of the paper, background for the project is provided. This background includes a discussion of some of the activities SWRL staff engaged in prior to constructing the assessment specifications; it also outlines the types of information and material included in the language-arts specifications. The background is followed by specifications for the objectives in the Capitalization and Punctuation categories.

BACKGROUND

Presented with a list of language-arts objectives to be assessed by a large metropolitan school district, SWRL responded to the list before writing actual specifications and items. This response pointed out overlaps between reading and language arts objectives and recommended that some objectives be deleted from assessment. These deletions were recommended (1) when objectives were assessed by the same skill at a different semester or by another skill in the specifications, or (2) when the skill did not lend itself to large-scale assessment.

SWRL also described the assessment differences for objectives that had been listed by the district for testing at more than one semester.

For some of these objectives, differences in content could be described; for other objectives, assessment could only be differentiated by the type of format or the vocabulary level used for the items. SWRL also commented that some objectives, on the basis of SWRL's analyses of textbook presentation, seemed to be specified for assessment at a grade that might be too early for mastery.

In responding to SWRL's recommendations, the district moved some objectives to higher grades and deleted others. The district also considered many of the differentiations SWRL had proposed for objectives listed for assessment at more than one semester. However, district people ultimately decided not to differentiate between or among levels of assessment, but to assess the whole objective for every semester at which that objective was listed.

Specifications and items were then prepared by SWRL staff. The specifications are primarily based on an analysis of the district's instructional guide, together with SWRL's analyses of language-arts textbooks. In some cases, where the statement of the objective was amenable to interpretations other than that described in the guide, special care was taken to insure that resulting assessments would align with the local program, as described in the district's instructional guide.

For each assessed objective, complete specifications were provided. These specifications include content descriptions that note factors involved in the use of each objective, including other inherent skills and prerequisite knowledge. Each content description is followed by an item description. The description explains both the item stimulus and the answer choices. The item description also notes any other important considerations relevant to assessing an objective in the particular item format. At least one sample item is then presented for each objective; more items are included in the case of items that are interrelated by format or content. These sample items are generally ones actually used in the assessment instruments, with the following changes made for clarity in this presentation:

1. The correct answer is marked with a number sign (#).
2. Directions are included with each item. In the actual instrument for grades 1 and 2, directions are printed separately for the teacher to read to students; in addition, more specific instructions are provided at the early levels; e.g., "Look at number _____."

Additionally, teachers are encouraged to read (and explain) directions if students do not understand them. Teachers are also permitted to help students if they do not understand how to do a task so long as the help does not cue students directly to the correct response.

The vocabulary used is found in the Harris and Jacobson word list.* The words used for the A-level surveys are generally those listed at two or more grades below the level of assessment. The words for the B-level surveys are those listed for one or more grade levels below. Such vocabulary control helps ensure that reading ability is not a primary factor in determining students' language-arts success.

The Harris and Jacobson list does not contain a number of technical terms needed for directions (e.g., _sentence_, _punctuation_, _capitalize_).

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*Harris, A. L., & Jacobson, M. D. _Basic elementary reading vocabularies_. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

Such words were avoided where possible, but using them was necessary in many cases. In some instances the technical terms were used at the district's request, despite the availability of acceptable synonyms.

The assessment specifications are presented below. In general, these specifications are those originally submitted to the district because they are considered the most appropriate match for classroom instruction and student ability.

In addition to the Capitalization and Punctuation objectives covered in Part IV, other areas of language-arts assessment are described in the following documents:

Part I: Listening
Part II: Grammar Usage
Part III: Sentence Structure
Part V: Language Expression
Part VI: Spelling
Part VII: Literature
Part VIII: Study Skills, Mass Media, and Nonverbal Communication

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SPECIFICATIONS FOR CAPITALIZATION

OBJECTIVE 1

Identify the first word to be capitalized in a sentence.

Assessment Levels: 1A and 1B

CONTENT

The student uses a capital letter to begin the initial word in a sentence. The term sentence should be interpreted rather loosely in this context because students at this level are often not capable of composing or identifying grammatically complete sentences. Nevertheless, students should be expected to capitalize the first word of those phrases or clauses that they interpret to be sentences; e.g.:

> My dog likes to play with his favorite toy. A ball with a little bell in it.

However, fragments are not used as assessment items.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with the first word uncapitalized. Three choices for capitalization are given, listed in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The student selects the initial word in the sentence as the one word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

> Comment: These items have an inherent problem in that the correct response is always the first word. Students who recognize this pattern could conceivably respond without ever reading the items. This problem can be alleviated by mixing these items with the items for Objective 2 (Apply the rule for capitalizing the word "I") in the assessment instrument.

ITEM

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. we will ride with you.

we	ride	you
#0	0	0

OBJECTIVE 2

Apply the rule for capitalizing the word I.

Assessment Levels: 1A and 1B

CONTENT

The student uses a capital letter to write the personal pronoun I.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a simple sentence containing the uncapitalized pronoun I. Three choices for capitalization are given, listed in order of appearance in the sentence. The student selects i as the word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence. To provide contrast with items for Objective 1 (Identify the first word to be capitalized in a sentence), the correct answer is not the first choice.

ITEM

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. Mike and i can have fun.

and	i	fun
0	#0	0

OBJECTIVE 3

Apply the rule for capitalizing proper nouns naming pets and persons.

Assessment Levels: 2A and 2B

CONTENT

At Level 2A, the student uses a capital letter to begin the first name of a person. At Level 2B, the student uses capital letters to begin last names and names of pets.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

At Level 1A, the stimulus is a sentence containing an uncapitalized first name. At Level 2A, the stimulus is a sentence containing an uncapitalized last name or name of a pet. Three choices for capitalization are given, listed in order of appearance in the sentence. The student selects the name as the word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

Surnames used in items for Level 2A are preceded by a first name or title to ensure recognition. Common nouns and adjectives that are within the grade-level reading vocabulary are used as surnames.

ITEMS

Level 2A

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. She gave the yellow bike to sam.

gave	bike	sam
0	0	#0

Level 2B

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. My friend Ann white made this rocket.

friend	white	rocket
0	#0	0

OBJECTIVE 4

Apply the rule for capitalizing proper nouns naming days, months, holidays, and historical events.

Assessment Levels: 2A and 2B

CONTENT

At Level 2A, the student uses a capital letter to begin the name of a day (e.g., Saturday) and the name of a month (e.g., July). At Level 2B, the student uses a capital letter to begin the name of a holiday (e.g., Christmas, Memorial Day).

> Comment: Although the objective lists "historical events," the only such event exemplified in the instructional guide is Bicentennial, which is not an important event in the 1980's. Consequently, capitalization of historical events is not assessed.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

At Level 2A, the stimulus is a sentence containing the uncapitalized name of a month or a day. At Level 2B, the stimulus is a sentence containing an uncapitalized name of a holiday. Three choices are given for capitalization, listed in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The student selects the word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

> Comment: Because of students' limited reading skills at this level, the names of most days, months, and holidays are not on the prescribed vocabulary list.

ITEMS

Level 2A

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. David will call us on sunday.

call	us	sunday
0	0	#0

Level 2B

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. At thanksgiving, our friends come to eat.

thanksgiving	friends	eat
#0	0	0

OBJECTIVE 5

Apply the rule for capitalizing proper nouns naming particular places.

Assessment Levels: 3A and 3B

CONTENT

At Level 3A, the student uses a capital letter to begin the name of a street (e.g., Hill Street), a city (e.g., Tampa), a state (e.g., Texas), or a country (e.g., Canada). At Level 3B, the student uses a capital letter to begin the name of a river (e.g., Missouri River), lake (e.g., Lake George), park (e.g., Lincoln Park), or continent (e.g., Africa).

ITEM DESCRIPTION

At Level 3A, the stimulus is a sentence containing the uncapitalized name of a street, city, state, or country. Three choices for capitalization are given, listed in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The student selects the street, city, state, or country as the word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

The following are comments on the appropriate content for assessment:

1. Streets: There are two options available for assessing capitalization of streets: (1) capitalization of the name of the street (e.g., hill Street) or (2) capitalization of Street or Road following the name (e.g., Hill street).

   Street names can be selected from common nouns and adjectives that are within the students' reading vocabularies (e.g., Hill). The words Street and Road are acceptable, but Drive, Avenue, and Boulevard are not used since they may not be within students' reading vocabularies.

2. Cities: Names of cities can be developed from common nouns and adjectives (e.g., hill + town = Hilltown). When a city name is being used, it is clearly indicated as a city (e.g., city of Pittsfield). The words city and town are appropriate for this grade level; however, these words are not used as distractors.

3. States: State names used in the assessment are relatively familiar, short, and easy to read (e.g., Texas, but not North Dakota).

4. Countries: Names of countries are also familiar, short, and easy to read. For example, Canada and France are appropriate, but names such as Guatemala are not.

At Level 3B, the stimulus is a sentence containing the uncapitalized name of a river, lake, park, or continent. Three choices for capitalization are given, listed in order of appearance in the sentence. The student selects the name of the river, lake, park, or continent as the word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

There are two options for assessing capitalization of rivers, lakes, and parks:

1. capitalization of the name of the river, lake, or park; e.g., missouri River, Lake george, lincoln Park;
2. capitalization of River, Lake, or Park; e.g., Mississippi river, lake George, Lincoln park.

Names of rivers, lakes, and parks can be selected from common nouns and adjectives that are within the students' reading vocabularies; e.g., Red River, Turtle Lake, Bear Park.

Continent names may not be in students' reading vocabularies; consequently, those used need to be familiar, short, and easy to read (e.g., Africa).

ITEMS

Level 3A

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. We took a bus to the town of fox Hills.

A. took
B. bus
#C. fox

Level 3B

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. Our friends have a farm near Turtle lake.

A. friends
B. farm
#C. lake

OBJECTIVE 6

Apply the rule for capitalizing each word in the greeting and the first word in the closing of a letter.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student capitalizes all words in the greeting of a letter (e.g., Dear Friend). The student also capitalizes the first word in the complimentary closing of a letter (e.g., Your friend).

Knowledge of the technical terms greeting and closing is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

In item 1, the student selects the greeting that is capitalized correctly (choice B). Distractors are (1) a greeting in which dear is not capitalized (choice A) and (2) a greeting in which dear and the personal name are not capitalized (choice C).

In item 2, the student selects the complimentary closing that is capitalized correctly (choice A). Distractors are (1) a closing in which both words are capitalized (choice C) and (2) a closing in which neither word is capitalized (choice B).

ITEMS

Directions: Which greeting is right for a letter?

1. A. dear Charlie,
#B. Dear Charlie,
C. dear charlie,

Directions: Which closing is right for a letter?

2. #A. Your friend,
B. your friend,
C. Your Friend,

OBJECTIVE 7

Apply the rule for capitalizing story titles.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student capitalizes the first, last, and important words in the title of a story. Unimportant (i.e., uncapitalized) words in a title are articles (a, an, the), short prepositions (e.g., of, for, in), and conjunctions (e.g., and, or, but).

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence containing a story title with one of its important words uncapitalized. Three choices for capitalization are given, listed in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The student selects the word in the story title as the word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence, but not in the title. The stimulus clearly identifies the title as that of a story. Moreover, the title is in quotation marks so that the student can easily identify it as a title.

ITEM

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. Many surprising things happen in the story "The clown and His Pig."

A. things
B. happen
#C. clown

OBJECTIVE 8

Apply the rule for capitalizing proper nouns naming buildings and organizations.

Assessment Levels: 4A and 4B

CONTENT

At Level 4A, the student capitalizes the words in the name of a building, including nouns such as building, library, museum when they are part of the building's name. Articles (a, an, the), conjunctions (e.g., and), and prepositions (e.g., of) are not capitalized as part of the name of a building, e.g., Museum of Natural History.

At Level 4B, the student capitalizes the words in the name of an organization. Articles (a, an, the), conjunctions (e.g., and) and prepositions (e.g., of) are not capitalized as part of the name of an organization (e.g., Department of Education).

ITEM DESCRIPTION

At Level 4A, the stimulus is a sentence containing an uncapitalized part of the name of a building. Either the "proper name" (e.g., washington Monument) or the generic name (e.g., Washington monument) may be uncapitalized. Three choices are given for capitalization, listed in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The student selects the building name as the word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

At Level 4B, the stimulus is a sentence containing an uncapitalized part of the name of an organization. Three choices are given for capitalization, listed in order of appearance in the sentence. The student selects the organization name as the word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

ITEMS

Level 4A

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. The White house is a big building.

#A. house
B. is
C. big

Level 4B

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. The football players on the Flying eagles have new team jackets.

   A. players
   #B. eagles
   C. jackets

OBJECTIVE 9

Apply the rule for capitalizing abbreviations of proper nouns.

Assessment Levels: 4A and 4B

CONTENT

At Level 4A, the student capitalizes the following abbreviations of personal titles: Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr.

At Level 4B, the student capitalizes abbreviations for the names of days (e.g., Sat.) and of months (e.g., Jan.).

> Comments: Capitalization of other kinds of abbreviations (e.g., streets, states) is not included in the instructional guide.
>
> The use of periods with abbreviations for days and months is assessed at Level 2A.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

For Level 4A, the stimulus is a sentence containing the uncapitalized abbreviation of a personal title. This title is followed by a (capitalized) surname. Three choices are given for capitalization, listed in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The student selects the personal title as the word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence; they are short (2-4 letters in length) in order to be similar in length to the correct answer.

At Level 4B, the stimulus consists of the following sequence: the abbreviation of a day, the abbreviation of a month, and a numerical date; e.g., Sat., Jan. 6. The student selects the sequence that is correctly capitalized. Distractors are of two types: (1) the sequence with the day uncapitalized (e.g., sat., Jan. 6) and (2) the sequence with the month uncapitalized (e.g., Sat., jan. 6).

> Comment: This objective is not assessed in sentence context because the use of abbreviations for days and months is generally frowned upon in written text.

ITEMS

Level 4A

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. At the zoo, dr. Fair takes care of sick animals.

    A. the
    #B. dr.
    C. of

Level 4B

Directions: Which one is correct?

1. A. Mon., jan. 6
   #B. Mon., Jan. 6
   C. mon., Jan. 6

OBJECTIVE 10

Apply the rule for capitalizing initials.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student capitalizes initials that represent abbreviations for (1) middle names (e.g., John L. Smith), (2) first names (e.g., J. Smith), and (3) both first and middle names (e.g., J. L. Smith). Initials are capitalized because they are the first letters of personal names, and names of persons are always capitalized (see Objective 3).

Comment: Use of periods with initials is assessed at Level 2B.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence containing an uncapitalized initial for a first name or for a middle name. A first-name initial is followed by an optional middle initial and by a surname. A middle-name initial is preceded by a first name (or a first initial) and followed by a surname. Three choices are given for capitalization, listed in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The student selects the initial as the word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence; they are short (1-3 letters in length) in order to be similar in length to the correct answer.

ITEM

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. Have you ever heard of Booker t. Washington?

A. you
B. of
#C. t.

OBJECTIVE 11

Apply the rule for capitalizing proper adjectives.

Assessment Level: 5A and 5B

CONTENT

The student capitalizes proper adjectives--i.e., adjectives formed from proper nouns; e.g., American. Many, if not most, proper adjectives are derived from the names of countries and continents (see Objective 5); e.g., American is derived from America. In addition, many proper adjectives are also used as proper nouns; e.g., an American--someone from America.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence containing an uncapitalized proper adjective. Three choices are given for capitalization, listed in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The student selects the proper adjective as the word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

> Comment: The prescribed word list does not include proper adjectives. Consequently, such words may not be in students' reading vocabularies. However, the words are those used in the instructional guide, so students should be familiar with them.

ITEM

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. Everyone wanted the hungarian dances to dance again.

   A. wanted
   #B. hungarian
   C. again

OBJECTIVE 12

Apply the rule for capitalizing the first word in a direct quotation.

Assessment Levels: 5A and 5B

CONTENT

At Level 5A, the student capitalizes the first word in a direct quotation when the direct quotation begins a sentence; e.g., "Why do diamonds sparkle?" he asked. Because the direct quotation begins a sentence, the objective at this level is a version of the rule that the first word in a sentence is capitalized (see Objective 1).

At Level 5B, the student capitalizes the first word in a direct quotation when the direct quotation begins in the middle of a sentence; e.g., Julie said, "Maybe I could start a stamp collection." Implicit in this objective is the ability to distinguish a direct quotation (enclosed in quotation marks) from the rest of the sentence.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

For Level 5A, the stimulus is a sentence that begins with a direct quotation. The first word in the quotation (and therefore the first word in the sentence) is uncapitalized. The quotation is followed by a speaker tag; e.g., she said. For Level 5B, the stimulus is a sentence that has a direct quotation following an initial speaker tag; e.g., Oliver asked. Three choices are given for capitalization, listed in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The student selects the first word in the direct quotation as the word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

ITEMS

Level 5A

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. "the red signal tells us to stop," she said.

#A. the
B. red
C. stop

Level 5B

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. Oliver asked, "can we play a game today?"

#A. can
B. play
C. today

OBJECTIVE 13

Apply the rule for capitalizing words referring to the Diety and sacred writings.

Comment: The instructional guide covers words referring to deity in general (not only to "the Deity," which usually means the Judeo-Christian God). In addition, it covers names of religions, although this content is not mentioned in the statement of the objective. And while they are labeled as "Religion," instruction also includes names of adherents to religions (e.g., Muslim) and proper adjectives referring to religions (e.g., Jewish). Assessment is based on the whole range of instructional content.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student capitalizes the names of deity (e.g., Allah), of sacred writings (e.g., Koran), of religions (e.g., Islam), of adherents to religions (e.g., Muslim), and of proper adjectives referring to religions (e.g., Jewish). Implicit in this skill is a considerable knowledge of world religions (e.g., knowledge that the Paradise Scriptures describe the wisdom of Buddhism).

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence containing an uncapitalized name of a deity, a sacred writing, a religion, an adherent to a religion, or an uncapitalized proper adjective referring to a religion. Three choices are given for capitalization, listed in the same order as they appear in the sentence. The student selects the appropriate religious word as the word requiring capitalization. Distractors are other words in the sentence.

Comment: The prescribed word list does not include the words assessed by this skill. Consequently, such words may not be in students' reading vocabularies.

ITEM

Directions: Which word should begin with a capital letter?

1. A mormon church is near my house.

#A. mormon
B. near
C. house

OBJECTIVE 14

Apply the basic rules of capitalization.

Assessment Levels: 6A and 6B

CONTENT

The en-route objectives that are assessed at earlier levels are covered here. At Level 6A, content covers objectives specified for Levels 2A-3B. At Level 6B, content covers objectives specified for Levels 4A-5B. See those objectives for the relevant content.

> Comment: Objectives specified for Levels 1A-1B are not assessed here because they are too basic to be assessed five years after initial mastery.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

For descriptions of items included in this review, see the specifications for lower levels.

ITEMS

For example items, see specifications for lower levels.

SPECIFICATIONS FOR PUNCTUATION

OBJECTIVE 1

Apply the rule for using periods to follow declarative sentences.

Assessment Levels: 1A and 1B

CONTENT

Recognizing the need for terminal punctuation, the student uses a period to end a declarative sentence, which may be known to the student as a "telling sentence." Since all declarative sentences must end with a period, the period usually defines a declarative (or imperative) sentence.

Knowledge of the term declarative is not prerequisite to this objective.

Comments: The instructional guide covers (1) discriminating between complete sentences and phrases, (2) discriminating between declarative and interrogative sentences, and (3) punctuating declarative sentences. Since the first two tasks are assessed in other areas of objectives, the content for this objective is limited to punctuation of declarative sentences.

A declarative sentence can generally be changed to an interrogative or exclamatory sentence by the use of a question mark or an exclamation mark, respectively; e.g.:

Declarative:	That was a good movie.
Interrogative:	That was a good movie?
Exclamatory:	That was a good movie!

In speech, these sentences are differentiated on the basis of intonation and stress.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a declarative sentence with a blank replacing the terminal period. The student selects the period as the appropriate insertion for the blank. The distractor is a comma. A question mark or an exclamation mark cannot be used as a distractor because either mark could be the correct response, depending on the student's interpretation of the stimulus sentence. Other punctuation marks--e.g., semicolor or colon--are not used because they are generally not familiar to students at this level.

ITEM

Directions: Which mark goes in the blank?

1. Ann can play__

,　　.
○　#○

OBJECTIVE 2

Apply the rule for using question marks with interrogative sentences.

Assessment Levels: 1A and 1B

CONTENT

Recognizing the need for terminal punctuation, the student uses a question mark to end an interrogative sentence, which may be known to the student as a question or an "asking sentence." At Level 1A, students are expected to recognize and punctuate interrogative sentences that begin with a wh word (i.e., who, what, when, where, why, how). At Level 1B, students are expected to recognize and punctuate yes/no questions, which begin with forms of be or with auxiliary verbs.

Knowledge of the term interrogative is not prerequisite to this objective.

> Comments: The instructional guide also includes discriminating between declarative and interrogative sentences. Since this task is assessed by an objective in a different section, the content for this objective is limited to punctuation of interrogative sentences.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

At Level 1A, the stimulus is an interrogative sentence that begins with a wh word. At Level 1B, the stimulus for each item is a yes/no question. The student selects the question mark as the appropriate insertion for the blank that follows the sentence. The distractor is a period. An exclamation mark cannot be used as a distractor because it could be the correct response, depending on the student's interpretation of the sentence (e.g., What did you see! Is this your book!). Other punctuation marks--e.g., colon or semicolon--are not used because they are generally not familiar to students at this level.

ITEMS

Level 1A

Directions: Which mark goes in the blank?

1. What did you see__

?	.
#0	0

Level 1B

Directions: Which mark goes in the blank?

1. Is this your book__

? .
#0 0

OBJECTIVE 3

Apply the rule for using a period to follow an imperative sentence.

Assessment Level: 2A

CONTENT

Recognizing the need for terminal punctuation, the student places a period at the end of an imperative sentence, which may be known to the student as a command. Imperative sentences are also distinguished by their structure: The subject, _you_, is usually not stated (e.g., (you) Wash the dishes).

> _Comment_: The instructional guide also includes distinguishing among declarative, interrogative, and imperative sentences. Since this task is assessed by objectives in another section, the content for this objective is limited to punctuation of imperative sentences.

Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify imperative sentences. However, knowledge of the technical term _imperative_ is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is an imperative sentence with a blank replacing the terminal period. The student selects the period as the appropriate insertion for the blank. The distractor is a comma. The question mark cannot be used as a distractor because the sentence could be interpreted as a question (e.g., Take some birthday cake?). An exclamation mark is also an inappropriate distractor because the sentence could be interpreted as an exclamatory command (e.g., Look at the baby goat!). Other punctuation marks--e.g., colon or semicolon--are not used because they are generally not familiar to students at this grade level.

ITEM

Directions: Which mark goes in the blank?

1. Take some birthday cake__

$\overset{,}{0}$ $\quad$ $\#\overset{.}{0}$

OBJECTIVE 4

Apply the rule for using a period to follow abbreviations.

Assessment Level: 2A

CONTENT

The student places a period after abbreviations for days of the week (e.g., Fri.) and for months (e.g., Apr.).

> Comment: Capitalization of abbreviations is not assessed until Level 4B.

Knowledge of the technical term abbreviation is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a date. Item 1 contains a day of the week, a month, and a date; item 2 contains a month, a date, and a year. The student selects the line in which the abbreviation for the day/month is followed by a period. Distractors are lines in which (1) the unabbreviated form of the day/month is followed by a period and (2) the abbreviated form of the day/month is not followed by a period. In all three lines, the comma is placed in the correct position (i.e., between the day of the week and the month, or between the date and the year).

ITEM

Directions: Which date is correct?

1.	Fri., May 3 #0	Friday., May 3 0	Fri, May 3 0
2.	December. 9, 1981 0	Dec. 9, 1981 #0	Dec 9, 1981 0

OBJECTIVE 5

Apply the rule for using the apostrophe with contractions.

Assessment Level: 2A

CONTENT

The student uses an apostrophe in place of the deleted letter(s) in a contraction. At this level, the student is expected to form contractions with not and will. Implicit in this objective is the ability to recognize contractions and the complete words from which the contractions are formed.

Knowledge of the technical terms apostrophe and contraction is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence containing two underlined words. The student identifies the correct contraction formed from the underlined words. Distractors are forms in which (1) the apostrophe follows the contraction (e.g., didnt') or (2) the apostrophe precedes, by one letter, its correct position in the contraction (e.g., did'nt).

ITEM

Directions: Which word means the same as the words that have a line under them?

1. I did not like that show.

didnt'	didn't	did'nt
○	#○	○

OBJECTIVE 6

Apply the rule for using commas in dates.

Assessment Level: 2A

CONTENT

The student places a comma between a day of the week and a month (e.g., Wednesday, May 5) and between a date and a year (e.g., March 9, 1967).

> Comment: If a date occurs in the middle of a sentence, a comma is also required after the last element in the date (e.g., On June 14, 1982, I will be ten years old). However, the instructional guide includes only one example of a date in the middle of a sentence, and in that example, the final comma has been omitted. Therefore, assessment here includes only dates that occur at the end of a sentence.

Knowledge of the techical term comma is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence containing a date. The student selects the comma as the appropriate insertion for the blank. In item 1, a comma is required between a date and a year, and in item 2, a comma is required between a day of the week and a month. Distractors are a period and an exclamation mark.

ITEMS

Directions: Which mark goes in the blank?

1. Julie started school on September 12__ 1974.

   A. .
   #B. ,
   C. !

2. My birthday party will be on Saturday__ April 24.

   A. !
   B. .
   #C. ,

OBJECTIVE 7

Apply the rule for using exclamation marks to follow exclamatory sentences.

Assessment Level: 2B

CONTENT

Recognizing the need for terminal punctuation, the student uses an exclamation mark to end an exclamation sentence.

> Comments: Implicit in this objective is the ability to determine the "strong feeling" of a sentence. However, this is usually dependent upon the sentence's oral context. That is, a sentence becomes exclamatory when it is spoken with strong feeling. In writing, the use of the exclamation point is often a matter of subjective judgment, and the student defines an exclamatory sentence by punctuating it with an exclamation mark.

Knowledge of the technical terms exclamation and exclamatory sentence is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is an exclamatory sentence (within quotation marks) with a blank replacing the terminal exclamation mark. The student selects the exclamation mark as the appropriate insertion for the blank. Distractors are a period and a question mark.

Because written exclamatory sentences are so dependent upon the interpretation of the reader, two procedures are used to ensure that the student will recognize the stimulus as exclamatory:

(1) The exclamatory sentence is written as a quotation so that strong emotion can be suggested by the speaker tag (i.e., Pete shouted; Mary yelled).

(2) The directions specify that the student is to use the mark that is "best," rather than "correct." This reflects more accurately the subjective nature of the task.

The exclamatory quotations end the sentences so that other skills of dialogue punctuation are not assessed.

ITEM

Directions: Which is the best mark to use in the blank?

1. Pete shouted, "Let me out of here__"

!	.	?
#0	0	0

OBJECTIVE 8

Apply the rule for using a period to follow initials.

Assessment Level: 2B

CONTENT

The student places a period after the initials in a proper name.

> Comment: Capitalization of initials is not assessed until Level 4B.

Knowledge of the technical term initials is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a proper name: first name, middle initial, and last name. The student selects the line in which the initial is followed by a period. Distractors are lines in which (1) the first name is followed by a period, and (2) neither the first name nor the initial is followed by a period.

ITEM

Directions: Which name is correct?

1.	John T Brown	John. T Brown	John T. Brown
	0	0	#0

OBJECTIVE 9

Apply the rule for using the apostrophe to show possession.

Assessment Level: 2B

CONTENT

The student uses apostrophes correctly in singular possessive forms. The student must identify the correct position of the apostrophe in the singular possessive (i.e., between the root word and the s; e.g., boy's). Singular possessives may be formed from proper or common nouns (e.g., John's, dog's).

> Comments: The instructional guide also includes the formation of plural possessives. However, the district indicated that only singular possessives should be assessed at this level, with plural possessives being assessed at fifth grade.

Knowledge of the technical term apostrophe is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a pair of sentences. The first sentence establishes the possessive relationship between the target noun and the entity that is owned (e.g., Sam has a pet kitten). The student selects the correct possessive form of the target noun as the appropriate insertion for the blank in the second sentence. Distractors are (1) forms in which the apostrophe precedes, by one letter, its correct position in the possessive noun (e.g., Sa'ms) and (2) forms that contain no apostrophe (e.g., Sams).

> Comment: One distractor type is specifically avoided in these items, i.e., forms in which the apostrophe follows the s (e.g., sisters'). The use of such distractors would require the student to distinguish between singular and plural possessives (assessed at fifth grade).

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. My sister has a horse. My ______ horse likes to run.

sister's	siste'rs	sisters
#0	0	0

OBJECTIVE 10

Use commas in the greeting and closing of a letter.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student places a comma after the greeting and complimentary closing of a friendly letter.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a greeting (item 1) or a closing (item 2) of a letter. The student selects the line in which the greeting/closing is followed by a comma. Distractors are lines in which (1) the greeting/closing is followed by a period and (2) the greeting/closing is followed by no punctuation.

Knowledge of the technical terms greeting and closing is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEMS

Directions: Which greeting is right for a letter?

1. A. Dear Margie.
   #B. Dear Margie,
   C. Dear Margie

Directions: Which closing is right for a letter?

a. #A. Your sister,
   B. Your sister
   C. Your sister.

OBJECTIVE 11

Apply the rule for placing commas in the address of a letter.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student places a comma between the name of a street and its geographical designation (e.g., 257 Main Street, N.E.), and between a city and the state in which it is located (e.g., Richmond, Virginia).

Knowledge of the technical term comma is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is an address part. The student selects the comma as the appropriate insertion for the blank. Distractors are a question mark and a period.

ITEM

Directions: Which mark goes in the blank?

1. 725 Rose Street__ N.W.

A. ?
B. .
#C. ,

OBJECTIVE 12

Apply the rule for using a comma to separate words in a series.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student uses a comma to separate nouns (with their modifiers) in a series (e.g., We had bacon, eggs, and toast for breakfast).

Knowledge of the technical term comma is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence containing three or more nouns in a series. The student selects the comma as the appropriate insertion for the blank. Distractors are a period and an exclamation mark.

Most authorities agree that a comma should be placed before the conjunction (usually and) preceding the last item in a series. However, this comma is sometimes omitted in printed text. Therefore, items include the comma before the conjunction, and students are not assessed for their ability to use commas to separate the other items in the series.

ITEM

Directions: Which mark goes in the blank?

1. I got a bike__ a game, and a book for my birthday.

A. .
#B. ,
C. !

OBJECTIVE 13

Apply the rule for using a comma to separate the word too from the rest of the sentence.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student places a comma before the word too when too is the last word in the sentence (e.g., I lost my shoes, too). If too occurs in the middle of a sentence, a comma is required before and after the word (e.g., John, too, knows the answer).

Knowledge of the technical term comma is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence containing the word too. In item 1, too is at the end of the sentence. In item 2, too is in the middle of the sentence and is followed by a blank. Distractors are a question mark and an exclamation mark.

ITEMS

Directions: Which mark goes in the blank?

1. Alex can sing and dance__ too.

A. ?
#B. ,
C. !

2. Betsy, too__ is a good swimmer.

A. ?
B. !
#C. ,

OBJECTIVE 14

Apply the rule for using the colon to introduce a list.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student uses a colon to introduce a list of items in a sentence (e.g., I bought the following items at the hardware store: a hammer, a box of nails, a saw, and a screwdriver).

> Comment: According to the conventional rule, a colon is not used to introduce a list that serves as the grammatical object of a verb or a preposition, or that serves as a complement following a linking verb; e.g.:
>
> The winners are Jill, Dave, Mary, and Peter.
>
> However, the examples in the instructional guide include the use of a colon to introduce lists that follow a linking verb; e.g.:
>
> My girlfriends are: Kim, Ann, Sue, Mary, JoAnn, and Sandy.
>
> Since this use of the colon varies from standard punctuation practice, such sentences are not used in assessing this objective.

Knowledge of the technical term colon is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a complete sentence with a blank preceding a list. The student selects the colon as the appropriate insertion for the blank. Distractors are a comma and a period.

ITEM

Directions: Which mark goes in the blank?

1. We saw the following animals at the zoo__ tigers, elephants, lions, and monkeys.

   A. ,
   #B. :
   C. .

OBJECTIVE 15

Apply the rule for using the exclamation mark to follow strong interjections.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student places an exclamation mark after a strong interjection (e.g., Ouch!).

Comments: The instructional guide focuses on interjections that precede a complete sentence (e.g., Ha! I caught you). However, many authorities suggest that such interjections should be followed by a comma, with the exclamation mark coming at the end of the complete sentence (e.g., Ha, I caught you!).

Instruction for this objective also includes imperative sentences that precede declarative sentences (e.g., Run fast! The house is on fire). Since these exclamatory imperatives are complete sentences, they are not assessed here. Exclamation marks in exclamatory sentences are assessed at Level 2B.

Knowledge of the technical terms exclamation and interjection is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is an interjection followed by a blank and a complete sentence. The student selects the exclamation marks as the appropriate insertion for the blank. Distractors are a question mark and a period.

ITEM

Directions: Which is the best mark to use in the blank?

1. Hurrah__ We won first prize.

#A. !
B. .
C. ?

OBJECTIVE 16

Apply the rule for using a colon after the greeting in a business letter.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student places a colon after the greeting in a business letter. Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify the greeting in a business letter.

Knowledge of the technical term greeting is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a greeting for a business letter (i.e., Dear plus a personal title and a last name). The student selects the greeting that is correctly punctuated with a colon. Distractors are (1) a greeting punctuated with a period and (2) a greeting punctuated with a comma. Since the comma is used as a distractor, the directions emphasized that the greeting is for a business letter, as opposed to a friendly letter.

ITEM

Directions: Which greeting is right for a business letter?

1. A. Dear Dr. Stone.
   #B. Dear Dr. Stone:
   C. Dear Dr. Stone,

OBJECTIVE 17

Apply the rule for using quotation marks with direct quotations.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student places quotation marks and terminal punctuation--either a period or an exclamation point--in a dialogue quotation. Question marks as terminal punctuation in a direct quotation are covered by Objective 18.

Implicit in this objective is the ability to understand the concept of dialogue and to recognize quotation marks as indicators of dialogue. However, knowledge of the technical terms dialogue and direct quotation is not required.

> Comment: The instructional guide focuses on the proper placement of quotation marks, terminal punctuation, and commas in dialogue quotations. However, comma use is assessed by Objective 19. Consequently, assessment for Objective 17 includes only the placement of quotation marks and terminal punctuation.

Students are expected to punctuate quotations that contain initial speaker tags (e.g., Amy said, "We are out of water."), final speaker tags (e.g., "We are out of water," Amy said.), and interrupted dialogue (e.g., "We are," Amy said, "out of water.").

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Each item contains three versions of a sentence containing a dialogue quotation. The student selects the version in which the quotation marks and terminal punctuation are placed correctly. Distractors are versions in which (1) the quotation marks are misplaced (e.g., "Albert said," We'll be there soon) or (2) the terminal punctuation is misplaced (e.g., "I know the answer"! the girl cried).

ITEM

Directions: Which sentence is punctuated correctly?

1. A. "Albert said," We'll be there soon.
   #B. Albert said, "We'll be there soon."
   C. Albert said, "We'll be there soon".

OBJECTIVE 18

Apply the rule for using question marks and quotation marks to end an interrogative quotation.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student uses a question mark to end an interrogative quotation. The student also encloses the quotation (and the question mark) within quotation marks. Implicit in this skill is the ability to identify and punctuate interrogative sentences (see Objective 3). The student must also be able to use quotation marks appropriately (Objective 17).

> Comment: The instructional guide focuses on sentences that contain a final speaker tag (e.g., "Did he go home?" asked Tina). Consequently, assessment of this objective also emphasizes final speaker tags.

Knowledge of the technical terms question mark, quotation mark, and interrogative quotation is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Each item contains three versions of a sentence containing an interrogative dialogue quotation with a final speaker tag. The student selects the version that is correctly punctuated. Distractors are versions in which (1) a comma follows the quotation and a period follows the speaker tag (e.g., "Where are you going," asked Emily.), or (2) a comma follows the quotation and a question mark follows the speaker tag (e.g., "Where are you going," asked Emily?).

The verb asked in the speaker tag of item 1 suggests that the quotation is a question. In item 2, the verb said offers no such clue, and the student must choose solely on the basis of the syntax of the quotation. Consequently, item 2 may be more difficult than item 1. However, both said and asked are included here to ensure that assessment matches the instruction for this objective.

ITEMS

Directions: Which sentence is punctuated correctly?

1. A. "Where are you going," asked Emily?
   #B. "Where are you going?" asked Emily.
   C. "Where are you going," asked Emily.

2. A. "Did you like that story," said Alice?
   B. "Did you like that story," said Alice.
   #C. "Did you like that story?" said Alice.

OBJECTIVE 19

Apply the rule for using commas with direct quotations.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student applies the following rules for using commas in dialogue quotations:

(1) When the quotation is a declarative or imperative sentence, and it precedes the speaker tag, a comma follows the quotation and is enclosed within the quotation marks; e.g.:

> "Dinner is ready," said Mike.

(2) When the quotation follows the speaker tag, a comma is used to separate the speaker tag from the quotation; the comma is not enclosed within the quotation marks; e.g.,:

> Tina asked, "Where are you going?"

(3) When the speaker tag interrupts the text of the quotation, a comma is used before and after the speaker tag; the preceding comma is enclosed within the quotation makrs, but the following comma is not; e.g.:

> "The rain," said Pete, "has stopped completely."

(4) When the quotation is an interrogative or exclamatory sentence, and it precedes the speaker tag, the appropriate terminal punctuation is used, rather than a comma; e.g.:

> "Who was at the door?" Ann asked.
> "Give it to me!" yelled Jack.

Comment: The use of question marks in quotations is assessed by Objective 18. Consequently, interrogative quotations are not assessed here.

Knowledge of the technical terms comma and direct quotation is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Each item contains three versions of a sentence containing a dialogue quotation. The speaker tag precedes, interrupts, or follows the quotation. The student selects the version that is punctuated correctly. Distractors are versions in which (1) the comma is omitted or (2) the comma is placed in the wrong position.

ITEMS

Directions: Which sentence is punctuated correctly?

1. A. Amy, said "I'll help you."
   B. Amy said "I'll help you."
   #C. Amy said, "I'll help you."

OBJECTIVE 20

Apply the rule for using the comma to separate a name in direct address.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student uses a comma (or commas) to separate a proper noun of direct address from the rest of the sentence in which it occurs. The position of the comma(s) depends upon the position of the noun in the sentence:

(1) A noun of direct address located at the beginning of a sentence requires a comma immediately after it (e.g., Tom, please collect the papers).

(2) A noun of direct address located in the middle of a sentence requires a comma before and after it (e.g., Do you know, Jan, where my coat is?). However, such constructions are uncommon and are not included in the assessment.

(3) A noun of direct address located at the end of a sentence requires a comma before it (e.g., Watch you step, Pete).

Knowledge of the technical term direct address is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence that contains a proper noun of direct address. The student selects the correct blank as the position where a comma is to be added to the sentence. Distractors are other (incorrect) blanks in the sentence.

ITEM

Directions: Where should a comma go in the sentence?

1. Lucy__ please close__ the__ door.

#A B C

OBJECTIVE 21

Apply the rule for using a comma to follow mild interjections.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student uses a comma to follow a mild interjection at the beginning of a sentence (e.g., Well, I guess we're finished).

Knowledge of the technical term interjection is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence introduced by a mild interjection. The student selects the correct blank as the position where a comma is to be added to the sentence (i.e., after the interjection). Distractors are other (incorrect) blanks in the sentence.

> Comment: Since the interjection must come at the beginning of the sentence, the correct response for these items will always be choice A.

ITEM

Directions: Where should a comma go in the sentence?

1. Oh__ you found__ your__ jacket.

#A B C

OBJECTIVE 22

Apply the rule for using a comma with coordinating conjunctions.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student uses a comma to separate the independent clauses in a compound sentence. The clauses may be joined with the following conjunctions: and, or, but, yet, so. The student recognizes that the comma is placed before the conjunction in a compound sentence (e.g., Tom washed the dishes, and Mary waxed the floor).

> Comment: Instruction also requires students to provide the appropriate conjunction when combining two independent clauses. However, assessment here is limited to punctuation of compound sentences. The use of coordinating conjunctions is covered in another area of objectives.

Knowledge of the technical term coordinating conjunction is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a compound sentence. The student selects the correct blank as the position where a comma is to be added to the sentence (i.e., between the first clause and the coordinating conjunction). Distractors are other (incorrect) blanks in the sentence.

> Comment: The instructional guide notes that the comma is often omitted from a compound sentence if the two clauses are very short (e.g., They came and they went). Consequently, the clauses in the assessment items consist of four or more words so that students will recognize the need for a comma.

ITEM

Directions: Where should a comma go in the sentence?

1. The sky__ grew dark__ and the wind began__to howl.

A #B C

OBJECTIVE 23

Apply the rule for using a hyphen to divide a word at the end of a line.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

In order to maintain an even margin, the student uses a hyphen to divide a word at the end of a line. Only words with two or more syllables may be divided, and they must be divided between the syllables (e.g., prac-tice, not pr-actice).

> Comment: Most authorities agree that a word should not be divided so that fewer than three letters remain on one line (e.g., enor-mous is acceptable, but e-normous is not). However, the instructional guide includes several examples of hyphenated words that do not conform to this principle (e.g., va-cation, li-brary). Assessment includes as correct responses only words that have been hyphenated so that at least three letters remain on a line.

Knowledge of the technical term hyphen is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a set of three sentences in which one word is divided. The sentences are aligned with each other to facilitate visual comparison. The student selects the sentence in which the divided word is syllabified and punctuated correctly. Distractors are (1) a sentence in which the divided word is syllabified properly but the hyphen is at the beginning of the next line and (2) a sentence in which the divided word is hyphenated but is not syllabified properly.

ITEM

Directions: Which sentence is punctuated correctly?

1. A. Lucy pulled a small wooden spl-
   inter out of her finger.
   #B. Lucy pulled a small wooden splin-
   ter out of her finger.
   C. Lucy pulled a small wooden splin
   -ter out of her finger.

OBJECTIVE 24

Construct hyphenated compound words.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student recognizes that some compound words require a hyphen between the component words of the compound (e.g., mother-in-law). The student distinguishes the hyphenated compounds from (1) compounds that are written as one word (e.g., sidewalk), and (2) compounds that are written as two words with no hyphen (e.g., post office).

> Comments: Authorities frequently disagree on the structure of a hyphenated compound because the word is often in the transitional process of becoming one word, as in the word basketball. (This word was originally written basket ball, then basket-ball, and finally basketball.) The instructional guide encourages students to use a dictionary to check the spelling of compounds. However, if students cannot use a dictionary during assessment, they must then rely on their memory to determine the correct spelling of compounds. For this reason, only compounds in the instructional guide are covered.
>
> The instructional guide also indicates that numbers greater than ninety-nine are written as hyphenated compounds (e.g., one-hundred). However, the normal punctuation procedure is to use a hyphen only in numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine. Consequently, hyphenated numbers greater than ninety-nine are not assessed here.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Each item contains three versions of a compound word. The student selects the version in which the compound is written correctly with a hyphen. Distractors are versions in which (1) the compound is written as one word (e.g., twentytwo), and (2) the compound is written as two words with no hyphen (e.g., twenty two).

ITEM

Directions: Which word is written correctly?

1. A. father in law
   B. fatherinlaw
   #C. father-in-law

OBJECTIVE 25

Apply the rule for using a comma to set off introductory phrases.

Assessment Level: 6B

CONTENT

The student uses a comma to set off an introductory prepositional phrase from the rest of the sentence. Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify introductory phrases (covered in another area of objectives), but knowledge of the technical term prepositional is not required.

> Comment: A comma is used after all introductory prepositional phrases in the instructional guide. However, contemporary writers often omit the comma when the introductory phrase is very short; e.g.:
>
> By morning the snow was three feet deep.
>
> Consequently, assessment of this objective includes only introductory phrases of five words or more.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence containing an introductory prepositional phrase that is five words long. The student selects the correct blank as the position where a comma is to be added to the sentence (i.e., immediately following the introductory phrase). Distractors are other clearly inappropriate blanks in the sentence.

ITEM

Directions: Where should a comma be added to the sentence?

1. With__ no warning at all__ the dam__ collasped.
A #B C

OBJECTIVE 26

Apply the rule for using a comma after an introductory adverbial clause.

Assessment Level: 6B

CONTENT

The student places a comma after an adverbial clause that introduces a sentence (e.g., When the game ended, the players shook hands). Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify adverbial clauses (covered in another area of objectives). Examples in the instructional guide emphasize the use of adverbial clauses introduced by when and while. Consequently, when and while are also included here.

Knowledge of the technical term introductory adverbial clause is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence containing an introductory adverbial clause. The student selects the correct blank as the position where a comma is to be added to the sentence (i.e., following the introductory adverbial clause). Distractors are other (incorrect) blanks in the sentence.

ITEM

Directions: Where should a comma be added to the sentence?

1. When the___ storm was over___ we hiked___ back to the cabin.
A #B C

OBJECTIVE 27

Apply the rule for using commas for setting off parenthetical expressions.

Assessment Level: 6B

CONTENT

The student uses a comma or a pair of commas to separate a parenthetical expression from the rest of the sentence in which it occurs. A comma follows a parenthetical expression at the beginning of a sentence (e.g., Therefore, school will be closed tomorrow), and a comma is used before and after a parenthetical expression that occurs in the middle of a sentence (e.g., This is, however, not the time to discuss it). The instructional guide includes three different types of parenthetical expressions:

1) transitional expressions that establish a relationship between the content that precedes the expression and content that follows the expression (e.g., however, therefore);

2) expressions that comment on or qualify the assertion made in the sentence (e.g., in my opinion, of course);

3) single-word interjections (e.g., well, yes).

The use of a comma to follow an interjection is assessed at Level 5B under Objective 21 (Apply the rule for using a comma to follow mild interjections); therefore interjections are not assessed here.

Knowledge of the technical term parenthetical is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence containing a parenthetical expression. The student selects the correct blank as the position where a comma is to be inserted into the sentence. The comma follows a parenthetical expression at the beginning of a sentence or precedes a parenthetical expression in the middle of a sentence (the comma following the expression appears in the item stimulus). Distractors are other (incorrect) positions in the sentence.

ITEMS

Directions: Where should a comma go in the sentence?

1. However___ you should ask___ her to___ help you.
   #A B C

OBJECTIVE 28

Apply the rule for using quotation marks around specific titles.

Assessment Level: 6B

CONTENT

The student places quotation marks around the titles of poems, stories, songs, chapters, speeches, and articles.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus for each item is a sentence containing the title of a story (item 1) or a poem (item 2). The title is clearly identified in the sentence as that of a story or a poem. The student identifies the title as the part of the sentence that requires quotation marks around it. Distractors are other words in the sentence. At least one of the distractors contains the same number of words as the correct response so that the length of the response does not provide a clue to the correct answer. In addition, one of the distractors contains a capitalized word so that students cannot choose the correct response solely on the basis of capitalization.

Knowledge of the technical term quotation marks is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEMS

Directions: Which words should have quotation marks around them because they are the title of something?

1. John wrote a scary story called Phantom Island.

   A. John wrote
   B. a scary story
   #C. Phantom Island

2. The poem Old Ironsides is about a famous ship.

   A. The poem
   #B. Old Ironsides
   C. famous ship

OBJECTIVE 29

Apply the rules of punctuation.

Assessment Level: 6B

CONTENT

The en-route objectives that are assessed at earlier levels are covered here. See those punctuation objectives for the relevant content.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

For descriptions of the items included for this review, see the specifications for lower levels.

ITEMS

For example items, see specifications for lower levels.

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL LABORATORY
TECHNICAL NOTE

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART V: LANGUAGE EXPRESSION

Ann Humes and Larry Gentry

ABSTRACT

The specifications reflect the elementary schooling intentions of a large metropolitan school district. The specifications include content descriptions, item descriptions that detail the construction of appropriate assessment items, and sample items for assessing the objectives.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART V: LANGUAGE EXPRESSION

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Working in collaboration with a large metropolitan school district, SWRL developed assessment instruments for language arts for each semester (A and B) of Levels 1-6 (i.e., grades 1-6) in the district's elementary schools. This paper provides detailed specifications for one large category of objectives in the core curriculum that is described in the district's instructional guide. In the first section of the paper, background for the project is provided. This background includes a discussion of some of the activities SWRL staff engaged in prior to constructing the assessment specifications; it also outlines the types of information and material included in the language-arts specifications. The background is followed by specifications for the objectives in the Language Expression category.

BACKGROUND

Presented with a list of language-arts objectives to be assessed by a large metropolitan school district, SWRL responded to the list before writing actual specifications and items. This response pointed out overlaps between reading and language arts objectives and recommended that some objectives be deleted from assessment. These deletions were recommended (1) when objectives were assessed by the same skill at a different semester or by another skill in the specifications, or (2) when the skill did not lend itself to large-scale assessment.

SWRL also described appropriate assessment differences for objectives that had been listed by the district for testing at more than one semester.

For some of these objectives, differences in content could be described; for other objectives, assessment could be differentiated only by the type of format or the vocabulary level used in the items. SWRL also commented that some objectives, on the basis of SWRL's analyses of textbook presentation, seemed to be specified for assessment at a grade that might be too early for mastery.

In responding to SWRL's recommendations, the district moved some objectives to higher grades and deleted others. The district also considered many of the differentiations SWRL had proposed for objectives listed for assessment at more than one semester. However, district people ultimately decided not to differentiate between semesters of assessment, but to assess the whole objective for every level at which that objective was listed.

Specifications and items were then prepared by SWRL staff. The specifications are based primarily on an analysis of the district's instructional guide, together with SWRL's analyses of language-arts textbooks. In some cases, where the statement of the objective was amenable to interpretations other than that described in the guide, special care was taken to insure that resulting assessments would align with the local program, as described in the district's instructional guide.

For each assessed objective, complete specifications were provided. These specifications include content descriptions that note factors involved in the use of each objective, including other inherent skills and prerequisite knowledge. Each content description is followed by an item description. The item description explains both the item stimulus and the answer choices. The item description also notes any other important considerations relevant to assessing an objective in the particular item format. At least one sample item is then presented for each objective; more items are included in the case of items that are interrelated by format or content. These sample items are generally those actually used in the assessment instruments, with the following changes made for clarity in this presentation:

1. The correct answer is marked with a number sign (#).
2. Directions are included with each item. In the actual instrument for grades 1 and 2, directions are printed separately for the teacher to read to students; in addition, more specific instructions are provided at the early levels; e.g., "Look at number __."

Additionally, teachers are encouraged to read (and explain) directions if students do not understand them. Teachers are also permitted to help students if they do not understand how to do a task, so long as the "help" does not cue students directly to the correct response.

The vocabulary used is found in the Harris and Jacobson word list.* The words used for the A-level surveys are generally those listed at two or more grades below the level of assessment. The words for the B-level surveys are those listed for one or more grade levels below. Such vocabulary control helps ensure that reading ability is not a primary factor in determining students' language-arts success.

The assessment specifications are presented below. In general, these specifications are those originally submitted to the district because they are considered the most appropriate match for classroom instruction and student ability.

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*Harris, A. L., & Jacobson, M. D. Basic elementary reading vocabularies. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

In addition to the objectives covered in Part V, other areas of language-arts assessment are described in the following documents:

Part I: Listening
Part II: Grammar Usage
Part III: Sentence Structure
Part IV: Capitalization and Punctuation
Part VI: Spelling
Part VII: Literature
Part VIII: Study Skills, Mass Media, and Nonverbal Communication

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SPECIFICATIONS

OBJECTIVE 1

Apply the rule for using regular verbs in the present tense.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student uses sentences in which the subject and the regular, present tense verb agree in person and number. At this grade level, the subject and verb are adjacent so that it is easier to determine the relationship; e.g., agreement should be easier in The children want me to go with them than in The children in my class want me to go with them, where the singular noun class in the phrase in my class may interrupt the relationship between the plural subject children and the verb want.

At this level, the student understands that the suffix -s must be added to most verbs with third-person singular subjects (e.g., he wants, she calls, it pops). Some verbs require -es in the same case (e.g., he misses) or a modification of the spelling of the verb when a suffix is added (e.g., she studies); however, such verbs are not included in the instructional guide for this objective and thus are not included in the assessment.

The student also understands that the root (base, uninflected) form of the verb is used with all other subjects in the present tense (e.g., I help, you work, we wish, they earn).

> Comment: Subject-verb agreement for be and have is covered by Objectives 3 and 4, respectively. Therefore, it is not included in assessment of this objective.

Knowledge of the terms verb and present tense is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the verb. The subject and verb are adjacent. The student selects the verb form that agrees with the subject. Answer choices are (1) the unchanged root word and (2) the root word plus the suffix -s. Answer choices are limited to these two in order to ensure precise assessment of the objectives.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Annie __________ her bike to school.

A. ride
#B. rides

OBJECTIVE 2

Apply the rule for using regular verbs in the past tense.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate past tense forms of regular verbs. The student understands that the simple past form of regular verbs is constructed by adding the suffix -ed to the present tense form.

Although the instructional guide indicates that some past tense verbs are formed by adding -d to the present tense form (e.g., liked), such formations actually entail dropping the final e and adding the suffix -ed. This skill is taught and assessed in another section.

> Comment: Past tense verbs that are formed by doubling the final consonant (e.g., stopped) or changing the final y to i before adding the suffix (e.g., cried) are not included in this objective.

Knowledge of the terms verb and past tense is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank where the verb belongs. The content of the sentence cues the past tense verb form. The student selects the past form of the verb from two answer choices. The distractor is the present tense form of the same verb.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Last night, I __________ my father.

#A. helped
B. help

OBJECTIVE 3

Apply the rule for using forms of the verb to be.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student uses sentences in which various forms of the verb be agree with their subjects in person and number.

The student understands that the verb be has the following forms:

1. present tense

   am: first-person singular subjects (i.e., I)
   is: third-person singular subjects (e.g., he, she, it, Pete, the car)
   are: all other subjects (e.g., you, they, we, the girls)

2. past tense

   was: first person singular subjects (i.e., I) and third person singular subjects (e.g., I, he, she, it, Pat, the house)
   were: all other subjects (e.g., you, they, we, the books)

Knowledge of the term verb to not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence in which a form of the verb be is used as a main or auxiliary verb. A blank is placed where the form of be belongs. The student selects the correct form of the verb from three answer choices. The distractors are two forms of the verb be that do not agree with the subject in person and/or number.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Henry __________ reading a book.

   A. am
   B. are
   #C. is

OBJECTIVE 4

Apply the rule for using the verbs have and has.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student applies the following rules for using the verbs have and has:

1. Use have with I, you, and plural subjects in the present tense and as the auxiliary form for the present perfect tense.

2. Use has with he, she, it, and other third-person singular subjects in the present tense and as the auxiliary form for the past perfect tense.

The assessment focuses on present perfect tense usage because assessment tasks in the instructional guide cover only the present perfect forms.

Knowledge of the term verb is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence that employs have or has as an auxiliary verb immediately preceding a past participle. A blank is placed where the verb belongs. The student selects the correct form of have from two answer choices. Thus have and has serve as distractors for each other. Answer choices are limited to these two forms in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Sue __________ worked very hard.

#A. has
B. have

OBJECTIVE 5

Apply the rule for using the verbs saw and seen.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate past forms of the irregular verb see. The student uses the simple past (i.e., saw) with no auxiliary preceding the verb and the past participle (i.e., seen) with an auxiliary verb. The simple past and past participle of see are formed through spelling and pronunciation changes.

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
see, sees	saw	seen

Implicit in this objective are two levels of understanding. First, the student must be able to identify see as an irregular verb. Second, the student must be able to identify the correct simple past and past participle forms of this irregular verb.

Knowledge of the term verb is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the main verb. The student selects the correct form of see to complete the sentence. Thus saw and seen serve as distractors for each other. Answer choices are limited to these two in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. They __________ the toys in the window.

   A. seen
   #B. saw

OBJECTIVE 6

Apply the rule for using the pronouns I and me.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student uses the nominative pronoun I as a subject and the objective (accusative) pronoun me as the object (direct or indirect) of a verb.

> Comment: The objective pronoun me is also used after prepositions, but this usage is not covered in the instructional guide.

This objective entails two levels of difficulty:

1. Simple subjects: I, me studied with Pat.
2. Conjoined noun phrases: Pat and I, me studied together.

In simple sentences, as illustrated in (1) above, correct pronoun usage may not be difficult. However, pronouns in conjoined noun phrases, illustrated in (2) above, often cause usage problems; e.g.:

Pat and me studied together.

> Comment: Although the objective includes the use of I and me in "polite" usage (e.g., "Pat and I/me" rather than "I/me and Pat"), this aspect of instruction is not assessed here. While "politeness" may provide the context for an effective lesson in pronoun usage, it is not amenable to objective assessment.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence that requires the use of the pronoun I or the pronoun me. A blank is placed where the pronoun belongs. The student chooses the correct pronoun for the sentence. Thus, I and me serve as distractors for each other. Answer choices are limited to these two in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEMS

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Will you help __________ with this?

   A. I
   #B. me

2. Joe and __________ went to the store.

#A. I
B. me

OBJECTIVE 7

Apply the rule for using to, too, and two.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student recognizes that to, too, and two are homophones--they sound the same, but that have different meanings and different spellings. Given the context in which the particular homophone occurs, the student uses the correct spelling.

Homophones are difficult for many students because their spellings cannot be based on sound or rules alone, but on meaning as well. Consequently, students must depend upon memory to choose correctly among homophones.

> Comment: Since, by definition, the homophones in a given set are always pronounced alike, it is impossible to use the "wrong" homophone in speech. Thus, the employment of correct homophones is more appropriately considered to be a spelling skill.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a simple sentence with a blank where the homophone belongs. The student selects the correct answer from three answer choices. The distractors are the other two words that have the same pronunciation but a different meaning and a different spelling.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. My friend has ________ horses.

A. to
B. too
#C. two

OBJECTIVE 8

Apply the rule for using forms of the verb draw.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate forms of the irregular verb draw. The student uses (1) the -s form for third-person singular subjects (i.e., draws), but the form without -s for all other subjects of sentences in the present tense, (2) the simple past form (i.e., draw) without an auxiliary, and (3) the past participle (i.e., drawn) with an auxiliary verb. The simple past and the past participle of this verb are formed through spelling and pronunciation changes.

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
draw	drew	drawn

Implicit in this objective are two levels of understanding. First, the student must have the ability to identify draw as an irregular verb. Second, the student must be able to identify the correct past forms of this irregular verb.

Comment: Items do not assess for present tense because (1) the instructional guide focuses primarily on past forms (which are the difficult elements of the objective) and (2) the present tense forms are regular and are assessed by other objectives.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the main verb. The student selects the correct simple past or past participle to complete the sentence. Distractors consist of (1) the other past form of the verb and (2) a nonce word created by adding -ed to the base verb (i.e., drawed). This latter distractor is provided because its selection can reveal whether the student recognizes that past tenses for some verbs are not formed in the same way as they are for regular verbs.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Last week, Jim __________ a picture of a farm.

A. drawn
#B. drew
C. drawed

OBJECTIVE 9

Apply the rule for using forms of verb contractions.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student uses sentences in which the negative contracted forms of the verb be agree with their subjects in person and number.

The student understands that the negative contracted forms of be are formed by combining the verb form with the word not, deleting the medial o in not, and substituting an apostrophe (e.g., is not - isn't).

> Comment: As described in the instructional guide, this is essentially a subject-verb agreement objective. The correct formation of contractions is not a part of instruction for the objective and therefore is not assessed.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence that employs a negative contracted form of the verb be. A blank is placed where the contraction belongs. The student selects the correct answer from three answer choices. The distractors are two negative contractions of the same verb that do not agree with the subject in person and/or number.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Judy __________ going to be here.

A. aren't
B. weren't
#C. isn't

OBJECTIVE 10

Apply the rule for using negative words.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student avoids the use of "double-negatives" in sentences and uses appropriate modifiers.

The student understands that many words carry the general meaning of "no" and that such words are called "negative" words. The student further understands that the use of two negative words in the same sentence often results in the construction of a "double-negative" sentence, which is not acceptable in Standard English usage.

> Comment: The use of the words any and no is assessed at Level 6A by Objective 30. Therefore, these words are not covered here.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence in which a negative word or construction (i.e., not, isn't) is employed. The modifier is followed by a blank space where a "positive" word belongs (to avoid the use of a double-negative). The student selects the correct word from three answer choices. The distractor is a negative word that would create a double-negative construction in the stimulus sentence. Only one distractor is employed because the substitution of other negative words is unlikely.

ITEMS

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. I'm not __________ going to do that again.

#A. ever
B. never

2. There isn't __________ good to eat.

A. nothing
#B. anything

OBJECTIVE 11

Apply the rule for using forms of the verbs begin, drink, and sing.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate forms of the irregular verbs begin, drink, and sing. The student uses (1) the -s form for third-person singular subjects (e.g., begins), but the form without -s for all other subjects of sentences in the present tense, (2) the simple past without an auxiliary, and (3) the past participle with an auxiliary verb. The simple past and past participle forms of these verbs are created through spelling and pronunciation changes:

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
begin, begins	began	begun
drink, drinks	drank	drunk
sing, sings	sang	sung

Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify begin, drink, and sing as irregular verbs and to identify their correct simple past and past participle forms.

> Comment: Items do not assess for present tense because (1) the instructional guide focuses primarily on past forms (which are the difficult elements of the objective) and (2) the present tense forms are regular and are assessed by other objectives.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the main verb. The student selects the correct simple past or past participle to complete the sentence. Districtors consist of (1) the other past form and (2) a nonce word created by adding the -ed suffix to the base form of the verb. This third choice is provided because its selection can reveal whether the student recognizes that the past tenses for some verbs are not formed in the same way as they are for regular verbs.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Lisa __________ a glass of milk with her cake.

   A. drinked
   #B. drank
   C. drunk

OBJECTIVE 12

Apply the rule for using forms of the verb bring.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate forms of the irregular verb bring. The student uses (1) the -s form brings with third-person singular subjects, but the form bring with all other subjects of sentences in the present tense, (2) the simple past without an auxiliary, and (3) the past participle with an auxiliary verb. The simple past and past participle, which are the same, are formed through spelling and pronunciation changes:

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
bring, brings	brought	brought

Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify bring as an irregular verb and to identify the correct simple past and past participle form of bring.

Comment: Items do not assess for present tense because (1) the instructional guide focuses primarily on past forms (which are the difficult elements of the objective) and (2) the present tense forms are regular and are assessed by other objectives.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the main verb. The student selects the past form to complete the sentence. Distractors are nonce forms, one of which is created by adding the -ed suffix to the base form bring. This choice is provided because its selection can reveal whether the student recognizes that the past tenses for some verbs are not formed in the same way as they are for regular verbs.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Joe asked what I had __________ for my lunch.

A. brung
#B. brought
C. bringed

OBJECTIVE 13

Apply the rule for using forms of the verbs come and become.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate forms of the irregular verbs come and become. The student uses (1) the -s form for third-person singular subjects (e.g., comes), but the form without -s for all other subjects of sentences in the present tense, (2) the simple past without an auxiliary, and (3) the past participle form with an auxiliary verb. The simple past forms of these verbs are produced by spelling and pronunciation changes; the past participle form is the same as the present form:

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
come, comes	came	come
become, becomes	became	become

Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify come and become as irregular verbs and to identify the correct past form.

Comment: Present tense is not assessed because (1) the instructional guide focuses primarily on past forms (which are the difficult elements of the objective) and (2) the present-tense forms are regular and are assessed by other objectives.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the main verb. The student selects the correct past form to complete the sentence. Distractors consist of (1) the other past form and (2) a nonce word created by adding the -ed suffix to the base form of the verb. This third choice is provided because its selection can reveal whether the student recognizes that the past tenses for some verbs are not formed in the same way as they are for regular verbs.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Last week Dan's grandmother __________ to visit him.

A. come
#B. came
C. comed

OBJECTIVE 14

Apply the rule for using forms of the verb do.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate forms of the irregular verb do. The student uses (1) the form does with third-person singular subjects, but the form do with all other subjects of sentences in the present tense, (2) the simple past without an auxiliary, and (3) the past participle with an auxiliary verb. The simple past and past participle of do are formed through spelling and pronunciation changes:

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
do, does	did	done

Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify do as an irregular verb and to identify the correct simple past and past participle of do.

Comment: Present tense is not assessed (except through distractor use) because the instructional guide focuses primarily on past forms (which are the difficult elements of the objective).

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the main verb. The student selects the correct past form to complete the sentence. Distractors consist of (1) the present tense form of the verb and (2) the simple past form.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. You have __________ good work today.

A. do
B. did
#C. done

OBJECTIVE 15

Apply the rule for using forms of the verbs eat, give, write, and take.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate forms of the irregular verbs eat, give, write, and take. The student uses (1) the -s form for third-person singular subjects (e.g., eats), but the form without -s for all other subjects of sentences in the present tense, (2) the simple past without an auxiliary, and (3) the past participle with an auxiliary verb. The simple past and past participle forms of these verbs are created through spelling and pronunciation changes:

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
eat, eats	ate	eaten
give, gives	gave	given
write, writes	wrote	written
take, takes	took	taken

Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify eat, give, write, and take as irregular verbs and to identify their correct simple past and past participle form.

> Comment: Present tense is not assessed because (1) the instructional guide focuses primarily on past forms (which are the difficult elements of the objective) and (2) the present-tense forms are regular and are assessed by other objectives.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the main verb. The student selects the correct past form to complete the sentence. Distractors consist of (1) the other past form of the verb and (2) a nonce word created by adding the -ed suffix to the base form of the verb. This third choice is provided because its selection can reveal whether the student recognizes that the past tenses for some verbs are not formed in the same way as they are for regular verbs.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Terry has _________ all the cherry pie.

A. eated
B. ate
#C. eaten

OBJECTIVE 16

Apply the rule for using forms of the verbs know, rise, blow, fly, choose, and freeze.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate forms of the irregular verbs know, rise, blow, fly, choose, and freeze. The student uses (1) the -s (or -es) form for third-person singular subjects (e.g., knows), but the form without -s for all other subjects of sentences in the present tense, (2) the simple past without an auxiliary, and (3) the past participle form with an auxiliary verb. The simple past and past participle forms of these verbs are created through spelling and pronunciation changes:

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
know, knows	knew	known
rise, rises	rose	risen
blow, blows	blew	blown
fly, flies	flew	flown
choose, chooses	chose	chosen
freeze, freezes	froze	frozen

Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify know, rise, blow, fly, choose, and freeze as irregular verbs and to identify their correct simple past and past participle forms.

Comment: Present tense is not assessed because (1) the instructional guide focuses primarily on past forms (which are the difficult elements of the objective) and (2) the present-tense forms are regular and are assessed by other objectives.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the main verb. The student selects the correct past form to complete the sentence. Distractors consist of (1) the other past form and (2) a nonce word created by adding the -ed suffix to the base form of the verb. This third choice is provided because its selection can reveal whether the student recognizes that the past tenses for some verbs are not formed in the same way as they are for regular verbs.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Amy gets up every day before the sun has ________.

A. rose
B. rised
#C. risen

OBJECTIVE 17

Apply the rule for using forms of the verbs run and tell.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate forms of the irregular verbs run and tell. The student uses (1) the -s form for third-person singular subjects (e.g., runs), but the form without -s for all other subjects of sentences in the present tense, (2) the simple past without an auxiliary, and (3) the past participle with an auxiliary verb. The simple past forms of these verbs are formed through spelling and pronunciation changes; the past participle form is the same as the present for run and the same as the simple past for tell:

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
run, runs	ran	run
tell, tells	told	told

Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify run and tell as irregular verbs and to identify their correct past forms.

Comment: Present tense is not assessed (except through distractor use) because (1) the instructional guide focuses primarily on past forms (which are the difficult elements of the objective) and (2) the present-tense forms are regular and are assessed by other objectives.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the main verb. The student selects the correct past form to complete the sentence. Distractors consist of (1) another form of the verb and (2) a nonce word produced by adding -ed suffix to the base form of the verb. This third choice is provided because its selection can reveal whether the student recognizes that the past tenses for some verbs are not formed in the same way as they are for regular verbs.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Last night Jimmy _________ his friend about his new pet.

   A. tell
   B. telled
   #C. told

OBJECTIVE 18

Apply the rule for using forms of the verbs let and leave.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student uses the verbs let and leave according to the appropriateness of their meaning in the context. The instructional guide provides the following definitions:

let:	to allow; to give permission
leave:	to go away; to allow to remain

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing a verb. The student selects the word with the meaning that is appropriate for the context. Let and leave serve as the only distractors for each other in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. The teacher will __________ the class go outside.

A. leave
#B. let

OBJECTIVE 19

Apply the rule for using forms of the verb sit.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate forms of the irregular verb sit. The student uses (1) the -s form for third-person singular subjects (i.e., sits), but the form without -s for all other subjects of sentences in the present tense, (2) the simple past without an auxiliary, and (3) the past participle with an auxiliary verb. The past and past participle forms of this verb, which are the same, are created through spelling and pronunciation changes:

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
sit, sits	sat	sat

Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify sit as an irregular verb and to identify the correct past form.

Comment: Present tense is not assessed (except through distractors use) because (1) the instructional guide focuses primarily on past forms (which are the difficult elements of the objective) and (2) the present tense forms are regular and are assessed by other objectives.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the main verb. The student selects the correct past form to complete the sentence. Distractors consist of (1) the present form of the verb and (2) a nonce word created by adding the -ed suffix to the base form of the verb. This third choice is provided because its selection can reveal whether the student recognizes that the past tenses for some verbs are not formed in the same way as they are for regular verbs.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Susan has __________ in the big chair for a long time.

#A. sat
B. sit
C. sitted

OBJECTIVE 20

Apply the rule for using forms of the verb teach.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate form of the irregular verb teach. The student uses (1) the -es form with third-person singular subjects (i.e., teaches), but the form without -es with all other subjects of sentences in the present tense, (2) the simple past without an auxiliary, and (3) the past participle with an auxiliary verb. The simple past and past participle forms of this verb, which are the same, are created through spelling and pronunciation changes:

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
teach, teaches	taught	taught

Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify teach as an irregular verb and to identify the correct past form.

Comment: Present tense is not assessed (except through distractor use) because (1) the instructional guide focuses primarily on past forms (which are the difficult elements of the objective) and (2) the present-tense forms are regular and are assessed by other objectives.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the main verb. The student selects the correct past form to complete the sentence. Distractors consist of (1) the present form of the verb and (2) a nonce word created by adding the -ed suffix to the base form of the verb. This third choice is provided because its selection can reveal whether the student recgonizes that the past tenses for some verbs are not formed in the same way as they are for regular verbs.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Yesterday, Mr. Brooks __________ the class how to play a new game.

A. teach
B. teached
#C. taught

OBJECTIVE 21

Apply the rule for using forms of the verb go.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate forms of the irregular verb go. The student uses (1) goes with third-person singular subjects, but go with all other subjects of sentences in the present tense, (2) the simple past without an auxiliary, and (3) the past participle with an auxiliary verb. The following are the forms of this verb:

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
go, goes	went	gone

Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify go as an irregular verb and to identify the correct past forms of this verb.

Comment: Present tense is not assessed because (1) the instructional guide focuses primarily on past forms (which are the difficult elements of the objective) and (2) the present-tense forms are regular and are assessed by objectives covering subject-verb agreement.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the main verb. The student selects the correct past form to complete the sentence. Distractors consist of (1) the other past form and (2) a nonce word created by adding the -ed suffix to the base form of the verb. This third choice is provided because its selection can reveal whether the student recognizes that the past tenses for some verbs are not formed in the same way as they are for regular verbs.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. The doctor has _________ home for the day.

A. goed
B. went
#C. gone

OBJECTIVE 22

Apply the rule for using forms of the verb lie.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate forms of the irregular verb lie (meaning "recline"). The student uses (1) lies for third-person singular subjects, but lie for all other subjects of sentences in the present tense, (2) the simple past without an auxiliary, and (3) the past participle with an auxiliary verb. The simple past and past participle forms of this verb are created through spelling and pronunciation changes:

Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
lie, lies	lay	lain

Implicit in this objective is the ability to identify lie as an irregular verb and to identify the correct past form.

Comment: Present tense is not assessed because (1) the instructional guide focuses primarily on past forms (which are the difficult elements of the objective) and (2) present-tense forms are regular and are assessed by other objectives.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the main verb. The student selects the correct past form to complete the sentence. Distractors consist of (1) the other past form and (2) a nonsense word created by adding the -ed suffix to the base form of the verb. This third choice is provided because its selection can reveal whether the student recognizes that the past tenses for some verbs are not formed in the same way as they are for regular verbs.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. The cat has __________ on the chair all day.

A. lied
B. lay
#C. lain

OBJECTIVE 23

Apply the rule for using the words a and an.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student uses the article a before words that begin with a consonant sound (e.g., a box, a uniform) and the article an before words that begin with a vowel sound (e.g., an apple, an hour). The important distinguishing criterion is the initial sound of the word that follows the article, regardless of how it is spelled. For example, the initial letter in uniform is a vowel, but the initial sound is a consonant; the initial letter in hour is a consonant, but the initial sound is a vowel.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing the article. The student selects a or an to complete the sentence. Thus a and an serve as distractors for each other. Answer choices are limited to two in these items to ensure precise assessment of the skill.

> Comment: Oral assessment may be more appropriate for this objective because an oral context emphasizes the initial sound of the following word rather than the initial letter.

ITEMS

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. We had _______ hard time thinking of a game to play.

#A. a
B. an

2. George ate __________ apple for lunch.

A. a
#B. an

OBJECTIVE 24

Apply the rule for using the words good and well.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student uses good as an adjective to modify nouns and well as (1) an adverb to modify verbs and (2) an adjective to express the state of a physical condition (e.g., a person feels/looks well).

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank where the assessed word belongs. The student selects good or well. Answer choices are limited to these two words in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Linda rides a bike very ________.

A. good
#B. well

OBJECTIVE 25

Apply the rule for using the words its and it's.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student recognizes that its and it's are homophones--they sound the same, but have different meanings and different spellings. The student uses its as a possessive form and it's as the contracted form of it is. Given the context in which the particular homophone occurs, the student uses the correct spelling.

> Comment: Since the homophones in a given set are always pronounced alike, it is impossible to use the "wrong" homophone in speech. Consequently, the use of correct homophones is more appropriately considered to be a spelling skill.

Homophones are difficult for many students because their spellings are not based on sound or rules alone, but on meaning as well. Consequently, students must depend upon memory to choose correctly between homophones.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank where the assessed word belongs. The student reads the sentence and then selects its or it's to complete the sentence. Answer choices are limited to these two words in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. The dog was chasing _________ tail.

A. it's
#B. its

OBJECTIVE 26

Apply the rule for using the words their and they're.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student recognizes that their and they're are homophones--they sound the same, but have different meanings and different spellings. The student uses their as a possessive form and they're as the contracted form of they are. Given the context in which the particular homophone occurs, the student uses the correct spelling.

> Comment: Since the homophones in a given set are always pronounced alike, it is impossible to use the "wrong" homophone in speech. Consequently, the use of correct homophones is more appropriately considered to be a spelling skill.

Homophones are difficult for many students because their spellings are not based on sound or rules alone, but on meaning as well. Consequently, students must depend upon memory to choose correctly between homophones.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank where the assessed word belongs. The student reads the sentence and then selects their or they're to complete the sentence. Answer choices are limited to these two words in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. The children put __________ books away.

#A. their
B. they're

OBJECTIVE 27

Apply the rule for using the words whose and who's.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student recognizes that whose and who's are homophones--they sound the same, but have different meanings and different spellings. The student uses whose as a possessive form and who's as the contracted form of who is. Given the context in which the particular homophone occurs, the student uses the correct spelling.

> Comment: Since the homophones in a given set are always pronounced alike, it is impossible to use the "wrong" homophone in speech. Consequently, the use of correct homophones is more appropriately considered to be a spelling skill.

Homophones are difficult for many students because their spellings are not based on sound or rules alone, but on meaning as well. Consequently, students must depend upon memory to choose correctly between homophones.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank where the assessed word belongs. The student reads the sentence and then selects whose or who's to complete the sentence. Answer choices are limited to these two words in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Eric wants to know ________ book this is.

#A. whose
B. who's

OBJECTIVE 28

Apply the rule for using the words your and you're.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student recognizes that your and you're are homophones--they sound the same, but have different meanings and different spellings. The student uses your as a possessive form and you're as the contracted form of you are. Given the context in which the particular homophone occurs, the student uses the correct spelling.

> Comment: Since the homophones in a given set are always pronounced alike, it is impossible to use the "wrong" homophone in speech. Consequently, the use of correct homophones is more appropriately considered to be a spelling skill.

Homophones are difficult for many students because their spellings are not based on sound or rules alone, but on meaning as well. Consequently, students must depend upon memory to choose correctly between homophones.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank where the assessed word belongs. The student reads the sentence and then selects your or you're to complete the sentence. Answer choices are limited to these two words in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. When __________ finished with the test, let me know.

A. your
#B. you're

OBJECTIVE 29

Apply the rule for using the words among and between.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student uses the words among and between correctly. The student uses the word among in referring to more than two entities and the word between in referring to only two entities.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank where the assessed word belongs. The student reads the sentence and then selects among or between to complete the sentence. Answer choices are limited to these two words in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Ms. Deal divided the work __________ Ronnie, Alex, Amy, and Jan.

#A. among
B. between

OBJECTIVE 30

Apply the rule for using the words any and no.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student uses the words any and no correctly. The student uses any in negative contexts in order to construct sentences with single rather than double negatives (e.g., He doesn't have any fish) and no in a sentence context that does not contain another negative (e.g., He has no fish).

> Comment: Other double-negative constructions are assessed under Objective 10 at Level 3B.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank where the assessed word belongs. The student reads the sentence and then selects any or no to complete the sentence. Answer choices are limited to these two words in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. When we got to the movie, we didn't have _______ money.

#A. any
B. no

OBJECTIVE 31

Apply the rule for using the words at, to, in, and into.

> Comment: At the district's suggestion, in and into were not covered in the assessment because distinguishing between these two words is difficult even for educated adults.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student uses the appropriate preposition of location and direction in a prepositional phrase that shows the relationship between two words in a sentence--the word modified and the object of the prepositional phrase. The student uses at and to according to the following criteria:

at:	indicates the location is already attained
to:	shows direction toward

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank where the assessed word belongs. This stimulus clearly suggests attained location when the item is eliciting at as a response, and movement in the direction toward something when the item is eliciting to as a response. The student reads the sentence and then selects the correct preposition to complete the sentence. Answer choices are limited to the words at and to because discrimination among three or more choices would require greatly expanded stimuli in order to preclude ambiguity.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. All the children ran down the street when it was time to go __________ the swimming pool.

#A. to
B. at

OBJECTIVE 32

Apply the rule for using the words himself and themselves.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student uses the reflexive pronouns himself and themselves correctly. The student understands that these pronouns are unlike other reflexives in that himself and themselves consists of an objective (i.e., him, them) rather than a possessive pronoun (i.e., his, their) plus self or selves.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank where the assessed word belongs. The student reads the sentence and selects the reflexive form that has the objective rather than the possessive pronoun. Answer choices are limited to two in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective. For himself, hisself is the distractor; for themselves, theirselves is the distractor.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. Ricardo went to the zoo by __________.

#A. himself
B. hisself

OBJECTIVE 33

Apply the rules for using the correct forms of words.

Assessment Level: 6B

CONTENT

The en-route objectives that are assessed at earlier levels are covered here. See those objectives for the relevant content.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

For descriptions of the items included for this review, see the specifications at lower levels.

ITEMS

For example items, see specifications at lower levels.

SWRL SOUTHWEST REGIONAL LABORATORY
TECHNICAL NOTE

DATE: January 1, 1982
NO: 2-82/06

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART VI: SPELLING

Larry Gentry and Ann Humes

ABSTRACT

The specifications reflect the elementary schooling intentions of a large metropolitan school district. The specifications include content descriptions, item descriptions that detail the construction of appropriate assessment items, and sample items for assessing the objectives.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART VI: SPELLING

Larry Gentry and Ann Humes

Working in collaboration with a large metropolitan school district, SWRL developed assessment instruments for language arts for each semester (A and B) of Levels 1-6 (i.e., grades 1-6) in the district's elementary schools. This paper provides detailed specifications for one large category of objectives in the core curriculum that is described in the district's instructional guide. In the first section of the paper, background for the project is provided. This background includes a discussion of some of the activities SWRL staff engaged in prior to constructing the assessment specifications; it also outlines the types of information and material included in the language-arts specifications. The background is followed by specifications for the objectives in the Spelling category.

BACKGROUND

Presented with a list of language-arts objectives to be assessed by a large metropolitan school district, SWRL responded to the list before writing actual specifications and items. This response pointed out overlaps between reading and language-arts objectives and recommended that particular objectives be deleted from assessment. These deletions were recommended (1) when objectives were assessed by the same skill at a different semester or by another skill in the specifications, or (2) when the skill did not lend itself to large-scale assessment.

SWRL also described appropriate assessment differences for objectives that had been listed by the district for testing at more than one semester.

For some of these objectives, differences in content could be described; for other objectives, assessment could be differentiated only by the type of format or the vocabulary level used in the items. SWRL also commented that some objectives, on the basis of SWRL's analyses of textbook presentation, seemed to be specified for assessment at a grade that might be too early for mastery.

In responding to SWRL's recommendations, the district moved some objectives to higher grades and deleted others. The district also considered many of the differentiations SWRL had proposed for objectives listed for assessment at more than one semester. However, district people ultimately decided not to differentiate between or among levels of assessment, but to assess the whole objective for every semester at which that objective was listed.

Specifications and items were then prepared by SWRL staff. The specifications were based primarily on an analysis of the district's instructional guide, together with SWRL's analyses of language-arts textbooks. In some cases, where the statement of the objective was amenable to interpretations other than that described in the guide, special care was taken to insure that resulting assessments would align with the local program, as described in the district's instructional guide.

For each assessed objective, complete specifications were provided. These specifications include content descriptions that note factors involved in the use of each objective, including other inherent skills

and prerequisite knowledge. Each content description is followed by an item description. The item description explains both the item stimulus and the answer choices. The item description also notes any other important considerations relevant to assessing an objective in the particular item format. At least one sample item is then presented for each objective; more items are included in the case of items that are interrelated by format or content. The sample items are generally ones actually used in the assessment instruments, except that, for this document, the correct answer is marked with a number sign (#).

Teachers are encouraged to read (and explain) directions if students do not understand them. Teachers are also permitted to help students if they do not understand how to do a task, so long as the "help" does not cue students directly to the correct response.

The vocabulary used is found in the Harris and Jacobson word list.* The words used for the A-level surveys are generally those listed at two or more grades below the level of assessment. The words for the B-level surveys are those listed for one or more grade levels below. Such vocabulary control minimizes the possible interference that poor reading skills may have on spelling ability.

The Harris and Jacobson list does not contain a number of technical terms needed for directions (e.g., sentence, punctuation, capitalize). Such words were avoided where possible, but using them was necessary in many cases. In some instances when acceptable synonyms were available, the district preferred to use the technical terms.

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*Harris, A. L., & Jacobson, M. D. Basic elementary reading vocabularies. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

The assessment specifications are presented below. In general, these specifications are those originally submitted to the district because they are considered the most appropriate match for classroom instruction and student ability.

In addition to the Spelling objectives covered in Part VI, other areas of language arts assessment are described in the following documents:

Part I:	Listening
Part II:	Grammar Usage
Part III:	Sentence Structure
Part IV:	Capitalization and Punctuation
Part V:	Language Expression
Part VII:	Literature
Part VIII:	Study Skills, Mass Media, and Nonverbal Communication

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OBJECTIVE 2

Construct plurals of nouns ending in y following a consonant.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student recognizes that, while most noun plurals are formed by adding -s or -es to the root word, the plurals of certain words that end with the letter y are formed by modifying the spelling of the root word before adding the suffix.

The student understands the following specific rules:

1. When a noun ends with y preceded by a consonant, the plural is formed by changing the y to i and adding the suffix -es (e.g., baby-babies, penny-pennies).

2. When a noun ends with y preceded by a vowel, the plural is formed by adding the suffix -s (e.g., boy-boys, day-days). This rule is covered by Objective 3.

Knowledge of the term plural is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimuli are two pictures with accompanying text. The first picture depicts a single object or character; the picture is accompanied by the phrase describing its number and nature (e.g., one penny). The other picture depicts two of the same thing; it is accompanied by the adjective "two" and a blank where the noun plural belongs. The student selects the correctly suffixed word from three answer choices. The correct answer is the plural form in which the final y (preceded by a consonant) has been changed to i and the -es suffix has been added. The distractors are (1) the unchanged root word plus -s, and (2) the unchanged root word plus -es.

ITEM

Directions: The first picture shows just one thing.
The other picture shows two of the same thing.
Which word is the right spelling for more than one?

1. [picture: one penny] [picture: two pennies]

one penny two ______

#A. pennies
B. pennyes
C. pennys

SPECIFICATIONS

OBJECTIVE 1

Construct plurals by adding -s and -es to words.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student recognizes that the plural of a noun is usually formed by adding -s or -es to the root word. The student understands that -s forms the plural of most nouns, but that -es occurs after words that end with the letters s, z, sh, ch, and x.

Knowledge of the term plural is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a picture of two identical objects. The name of the object (in its singular form) is also presented, with a blank at the end of the word where the plural suffix belongs. The student selects the correct suffix from three answer choices. The distractors include the incorrect plural suffix (i.e., -s or -es) and an incorrect spelling (i.e., -ses) that represents an over-generalization of the rule.

ITEM

Directions: Which letter or letters finish the word?

1. [picture: two boxes]

box___

A. ses
#B. es
C. s

OBJECTIVE 3

Construct plurals of nouns ending in y following a vowel.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student recognizes that the plurals of certain words that end with the letter y are formed by modifying the spelling of the root word before adding the suffix. The student understands the following specific rules for forming plurals:

1. When a noun ends with y preceded by a vowel, the plural is formed by adding the suffix -s (e.g., boy-boys, day-days).
2. When a noun ends with y preceded by a consonant, the plural is formed by changing the y to i and adding the suffix -es (e.g., baby-babies, penny-pennies). This rule is covered by Objective 2.

Knowledge of the term plural is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimuli are two pictures with accompanying text. The first picture depicts a single thing; the picture is accompanied by the phrase describing its number and nature (e.g., one boy). The other picture depicts two of the same thing; it is accompanied by the adjective "two" and a blank where the noun plural belongs. The student selects the correctly suffixed word from three answer choices. The correct answer is the plural form in which -s has been added to the root word. The distractors are (1) the modified root word (y changed to i) plus -es, and (2) the unchanged root word plus -es.

ITEM

Directions: The first picture shows just one thing.
The other picture shows two of the same thing.
Which word is the right spelling for more than one?

1. [picture: one boy] [picture: two boys]

one boy two _____

A. boyes
#B. boys
C. boies

OBJECTIVE 4

Construct the plural of nouns formed in the same and in irregular ways.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student recognizes that the plural form of some nouns is spelled the same as the singular form (e.g., one deer-two deer). The student also recognizes that the plural of some nouns is formed by changing the spelling of the root word (e.g., one man-two men). Given a root word, the student can produce its correctly spelled plural form.

Plurals that are formed by changing f to v or ve and adding s are assessed by Objective 13.

Knowledge of the term plural is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence that requires the plural form of the target word. A blank is placed where the plural belongs. The student selects the correct plural form from three answer choices.

Item 1 assesses the student's ability to identify an unchanging plural form. Only one distractor, the plural form plus the suffix -s, is employed for this objective. Other incorrect spellings are unlikely (e.g., sheepes) and are therefore not employed as distractors.

Item 2 assesses the student's ability to identify a plural form that requires modification of the root word. The distractors include (1) the singular form plus the suffix -s, and (2) the plural form plus the suffix -s.

ITEMS

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. The farmer has many __________.

#A. sheep
B. sheeps

2. There were two __________ in the car.

A. mans
B. mens
#C. men

OBJECTIVE 5

Apply the rule for dropping the final vowel when adding suffixes that begin with vowels (keeping long vowel sounds.)

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student recognizes that the addition of a suffix to a root word often requires a modification in the spelling of the root word. The student applies the rule that when a suffix beginning with a vowel is added to a root word that consists of three or more letters and ends with a single letter e, the final e in the root word must be dropped (e.g., time + er = timer, but see + ing = seeing).

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with the root word (placed in a box) and a sentence that requires the use of a suffixed form of the root word. A blank is placed where the suffixed form belongs. The student selects the correct spelling from three answer choices. The correct answer is the word in which the final e has been dropped and the proper suffix added. The distractors for item 1 are (1) the unchanged root word plus the suffix, and (2) a spelling in which the final e has been dropped and the suffix added, but the final consonant has been doubled. This latter distractor is also included in item 2. The other distractor is changed to reflect an error in which the final e is dropped, but the suffix is incorrectly spelled. Such an error (i.e., savd) is more likely in words requiring a suffix beginning with the letter e than is an error in which a double e occurs (e.g., saveed).

ITEMS

Directions: Look at the word in the box. Which form of that word goes in the blank? Remember what you have learned about adding endings to words.

1. $\boxed{\text{make}}$

Jenny is __________ a new house for her dog.

A. makeing
#B. making
C. makking

2. $\boxed{\text{save}}$

I __________ some cake for you.

A. savved
B. savd
#C. saved

OBJECTIVE 6

Apply the rule for using an apostrophe to show possession (singular).

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student uses apostrophes correctly in singular possessive forms. Thus the student must identify the correct position of the apostrophe in the singular possessive (i.e., between the root word and the -s; e.g., boy's).

Singular possessives may be formed from singular proper or common nouns (e.g., John's/dog's) or from indefinite pronouns (e.g., someone's). However, indefinite pronouns are not included in this assessment because they are not covered in instruction. Neither are possessive inanimate nouns assessed since they are less frequent and are not accepted by some grammar authorities (e.g., not the cup's handle but the handle of the cup).

Implicit in this skill is the ability to distinguish between singular possessives and the plural forms of nouns. However, students should not be expected to distinguish between written forms of singular and plural possessives at this grade level. Plural possessives are designated for assessment at Levels 5A and 5B by Objective 9.

Knowledge of the technical terms apostrophe and singular possessive is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank replacing a singular possessive. The student selects, from three answer choices, the correctly spelled singular possessive form that completes the sentence. The distractors are (1) a form with no apostrophe and (2) a form in which the apostrophe precedes, by one letter, its correct position in the word. Forms with the apostrophe after the word (e.g., mothers') are not used as distractors because they represent the plural possessive.

ITEM

Directions: Which word goes in the blank?

1. This is my ________ friend.

A. mothers
B. mothe'rs
#C. mother's

OBJECTIVE 7

Apply the rule for doubling final consonants when adding suffixes that begin with vowels (keeping the short vowel sound).

Assessment Levels: 4A and 4B

CONTENT

The student recognizes that the addition of a suffix to a one-syllable root word often requires a modification in the spelling of that root word. The student applies the rule that when a suffix beginning with a vowel is added to a root word that ends with a single consonant letter preceded by a single vowel letter, the final consonant in the root word must be doubled. (When word final, the letters w and y are parts of vowel spellings and are not treated as single consonants.)

Content for 4A is the -ing suffix. Content for 4B includes the -ed, -er, -est, and -y suffixes.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with a short-vowel word (placed in a box) and a sentence that requires a suffixed form of the root word. A blank is placed where the suffixed form belongs. The student selects the correct spelling from three answer choices. The correct answer is the word in which the final consonant has been doubled and the suffix has been added. The distractors are (1) a misspelling in which the correct suffix has been added but the final consonant has not been doubled, and (2) a misspelling in which the final consonant is doubled, but the suffix has been spelled incorrectly.

ITEMS

Level 4A

Directions: Look at the word in the box. Which form of the word finishes the sentence? Remember what you have learned about adding endings to words.

1. $\boxed{\text{dig}}$

Greg is _________ in the garden.

A. diging
B. diggin
#C. digging

Level 4B

Directions: Look at the word in the box. Which form of the word finishes the sentence? Remember what you have learned about adding endings to words.

1. $\boxed{\text{stop}}$

The car ________ at the corner.

A. stoppt
#B. stopped
C. stoped

OBJECTIVE 8

Apply the rule for keeping the final e when adding suffixes that begin with consonants.

Assessment Levels: 5A and 5B

CONTENT

The student recognizes that when a suffix beginning with a consonant is added to a word ending with the single letter e, the e is usually retained (e.g., safe + ly = safely).

This objective presumes that the student also understands that when suffixes that begin with vowels are added to words that end with single e, the e is usually dropped (e.g., hope + ing = hoping). This rule is covered by Objective 5.

Content for 5A is the -ly suffix. Content for 5B includes the -less and -ful suffixes.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with the root word (placed in a box) and a sentence that requires a suffixed form of the root word. A blank is placed where the suffixed form belongs. The student selects the correct spelling from two answer choices. The correct answer is the word in which the suffix has been added to the unchanged root word. The distractor is a word in which the final e has been dropped and the suffix added. Answer choices are limited to two in order to ensure precise assessment of the objective.

ITEMS

Level 5A

Directions: Look at the word in the box. Which form of the word completes the sentence? Remember what you have learned about adding endings to words.

1. $\boxed{\text{safe}}$

The airplane landed ________.

A. safly
#B. safely

Level 5B

Directions: Look at the word in the box. Which form of the word completes the sentence? Remember what you have learned about adding endings to words.

1. $\boxed{\text{use}}$

A broken hammer is __________.

A. usless
#B. useless

OBJECTIVE 9

Apply the rule for using an apostrophe to show possession (plural).

Assessment Levels: 5A and 5B

CONTENT

The student uses apostrophes correctly to form plural possessives. The student must identify the correct position of the apostrophe in the plural possessive. The correct position of the apostrophe in regular plural possessives is after the s plural marker (e.g., boys-boys'). The correct form for irregular plural possessives not ending with s is 's (e.g., children-children's). This latter form parallels the correct form for regular singular nouns (e.g., dog-dog's) and is generally easier for students at this level.

Content for 5A is irregular plural possessives. Content for 5B is regular plural possessives.

Implicit in the objective at Level 5A is the ability to distinguish between irregular plural possessives and the plural forms of nouns. However, students are not required to distinguish between irregular and regular plural possessives until Level 5B. Singular possessives are covered by Objective 6 at Level 3B.

Knowledge of the terms apostrophe and plural possessive is not prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a set of related sentences. The first sentence establishes the plural nature of the target word and the second sentence requires a plural possessive. A blank is placed where the correct spelling belongs. The student selects the correct answer from three answer choices. The distractors are (1) forms with no apostrophe, and (2) forms in which the apostrophe precedes, by one letter, its correct position in the word. As noted above, forms with the apostrophe after the word (e.g., childrens') are not used as distractors at Level 5A because they are constructed in the same way as regular plural possessives, which are assessed at Level 5B.

ITEMS

Level 5A

Directions: Which word finishes the sentence?

1. The children read their stories to the class.
The __________ stories were very good.

A. childrens
B. childre'ns
#C. children's

Level 5B

Directions: Which word finishes the sentence?

1. Mike has two dogs.
The __________ names are Flip and Flash.

A. dog's
B. dogs
#C. dogs'

OBJECTIVE 10

Apply the rule for spelling words combining *i* and *e*.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student hears the stressed vowel sound in a two-syllable word and generates the corresponding vowel digraph with the appropriate *ie* or *ei* spelling.

Prerequisite to this skill is knowledge of the following rhyme that is used in the instructional guide to teach this objective.

> Use *i* before *e*,
> Except after *c*,
> Or when sounded like *a*,
> As in *neighbor* or *weigh*.

Comment: Exceptions to this rule include words in which the /ch/ or /sh/ sound precedes the vowel (e.g., *ancient*, *sufficient*), words in which the adjoining vowels are parts of two different syllables (e.g., *science*) and many common words such as *their*, *height*, *either*, *foreign*, etc.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence that employs a two-syllable word in which the stressed syllable is a vowel digraph that (1) is spelled *ie* or *ei*, and (2) conforms to the rhyme taught in instruction. A blank is placed where the assessed word belongs. The student selects the correct spelling from three answer choices. The distractors are (1) an incorrect spelling of the same word in which the letters of the digraph are transposed (e.g., *ie* becomes *ei*), and (2) an incorrect spelling in which another digraph for the sound is employed.

ITEM

Directions: Which word finishes the sentence?

1. Did you __________ any mail?

A. recieve
B. receave
#C. receive

OBJECTIVE 11

Apply the rule for adding prefixes (un, re, pre, dis).

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student recognizes that certain words are formed by the addition of a prefix to a root word. Given a root word, the student generates the appropriate prefix to spell a meaningful word.

The student understands that prefixes often have predictable meanings. The prefix un- frequently means "not" (e.g., unhappy), but sometimes means that an operation is reversed (e.g., unwind); re- can mean either "again" (e.g., reform) or "back" (e.g., return); pre- means "before" (e.g., preheat); dis means "not" (e.g., displease) or the "opposite of" (e.g., disappear).

Prefixes are frequently attached to word parts rather than root words (e.g., until, receive, predict, disgust). This aspect is not covered in instruction. Consequently, this facet of prefix usage is not assessed.

> Comment: Although this objective is categorized as a spelling activity, instruction in the guide deals exclusively with meaning. Thus, the spelling of prefixes is not assessed here.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a pair of related sentences. The first sentence provides the context for the second. The second sentence requires a prefixed word for its meaningful completion, but a blank is placed where the target word belongs. The student selects the correct answer from three answer choices. The distractors are both inappropriately prefixed forms of the root word.

ITEM

Directions: Which word completes the sentence?

1. The glass fell, but it didn't break.
   The glass is __________.

#A. unbroken
B. prebroken
C. rebroken

OBJECTIVE 12

Apply the rule for using proper nouns and adjectives formed from proper nouns.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student capitalizes proper nouns and proper adjectives.

The student understands that a proper noun is a word that names a particular person, place, or thing, and that such words are always capitalized (e.g., Nancy, Mexico, Christmas). The student also understands that proper nouns and words formed from proper nouns can act as adjectives (e.g., Hawaiian pineapple); such words are called proper adjectives and, like proper nouns, are always capitalized.

Comments: Some adjectives in the instructional guide are often considered noun adjuncts rather than proper adjectives (e.g., Ford automobile).

The instructional guide deals with the capitalization of proper nouns and proper adjectives. Consequently, this assessment focuses on capitalization rather than other elements of spelling structure. The capitalization of proper nouns is also assessed by objectives in other sections.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence that employs a proper noun (i.e., United States in item 1) or a proper adjective (i.e., French in item 2). A blank is placed where the target word belongs. The student selects the correct answer from two answer choices. The correct answer is either a capitalized proper adjective that is inferred from the use of a proper noun in the sentence (see item 1), or (2) a capitalized proper noun that is inferred from the use of a proper adjective in the sentence (see item 2). The distractor for both items is the uncapitalized form of the same word. Only one distractor is employed in order to provide precise assessment of the objective.

ITEMS

Directions: Which word completes the sentence?

1. People who live in the United States are often called ________.

#A. Americans
B. americans

2. The French language is spoken in ________.

A. france
#B. France

OBJECTIVE 13

Apply the rule for making words plural by changing f or fe to v.

Assessment Level: 6B

CONTENT

The student recognizes that the plural of certain root words that end with f or fe is formed by changing the f or fe to v and adding -es (e.g., calf-calves, wife-wives).

Since the instructional guide does not deal with words that do not follow this rule, students are not required to be familiar with exceptions (e.g., chef-chefs, safe-safes). Nevertheless, some students may recognize that the proper mode of affixation can be predicted on the basis of sound. If /vz/ is heard at the end of the plural word, then the rule is applied. If /fs/ is heard at the end of the plural word, the proper suffix is the letter s and no change in the root word is required.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with a word that ends with f or fe. The target word is displayed in isolation in a box. The student is also given a sentence that requires the use of the plural form of the root word, but a blank is placed where the suffixed form belongs. The student selects the correct spelling from three answer choices. The correct answer is the word in which the f or fe has been changed to v and the -es suffix has been added. The distractors are (1) a form in which the suffix -s has been added to the root word, and (2) a form in which the f or fe has been changed to v, but s (rather than -es) has been added.

ITEM

Directions: Look at the word in the box. Which form of the word completes the sentence? Remember what you have learned about adding endings to words.

1. half

Tony cut the apple into two __________.

A. halfs
#B. halves
C. halvs

OBJECTIVE 14

Apply the rule for spelling words correctly.

Assessment Level: 6B

CONTENT

The en-route objectives that are assessed at earlier levels are covered here. See those objectives for the relevant content.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

For descriptions of the items included for this review, see objectives at lower levels.

ITEMS

For example items, see specifications for objectives at lower levels.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART VII: LITERATURE

Ann Humes, Bruce Cronnell, Laila Fiege-Kollmann

ABSTRACT

The specifications reflect the elementary schooling intentions of a large metropolitan school district. The specifications include content descriptions, item descriptions that detail the construction of appropriate assessment items, and sample items for assessing the objectives.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART VII: LITERATURE

Ann Humes, Bruce Cronnell, and Laila Fiege-Kollmann

Working in collaboration with a large metropolitan school district, SWRL developed assessment instruments for language arts for each semester (A and B) of Levels 1-6 (i.e., grades 1-6) in the district's elementary schools. This paper provides detailed specifications for one category of objectives in the core curriculum that is described in the district's instructional guide. In the first section of the paper, background for the project is provided. This background includes a discussion of some of the activities SWRL staff engaged in prior to constructing the assessment specifications; it also outlines the types of information and material included in the language-arts specifications. The background is followed by specifications for the objectives in the Literature category.

BACKGROUND

Presented with a list of language-arts objectives to be assessed by a large metropolitan school district, SWRL responded to the list before writing actual specifications and items. This response pointed out overlaps between reading and language-arts objectives and recommended that particular objectives be deleted from assessment. These deletions were recommended (1) when objectives were assessed by the same skill at a different semester or by another skill in the specifications, or (2) when the skill did not lend itself to large-scale assessment.

SWRL also described appropriate assessment differences for objectives that had been listed by the district for testing at more than one semester.

For some of these objectives, differences in content could be described; for other objectives, assessment could only be differentiated by the type of format or the vocabulary level used in the items. SWRL also commented that some objectives, on the basis of SWRL's analyses of textbook presentation, seemed to be specified for assessment at a grade that might be too early for mastery.

In responding to SWRL's recommendations, the district moved some objectives to higher grades and deleted others. The district also considered many of the differentiations SWRL had proposed for objectives listed for assessment at more than one semester. However, district people ultimately decided not to differentiate between or among levels of assessment, but to assess the whole objective for every semester at which that objective was listed.

Specifications and items were then prepared by SWRL staff. The specifications are based primarily on an analysis of the district's instructional guide, together with SWRL's analyses of language-arts textbooks. In some cases, where the statement of the objective was amenable to interpretations other than that described in the guide, special care was taken to insure that resulting assessments would align with the local program, as described in the district's instructional guide.

For each assessed objective, complete specifications were provided. These specifications include content descriptions that note factors involved in the use of each objective, including other inherent skills and prerequisite knowledge. Each content description is followed by an item description. The item description explains both the item stimulus and the answer choices. The item description also notes any other important considerations relevant to assessing an objective in the particular item format. At least one sample item is then presented for each objective; more items are included in the case of items that are interrelated by format or content. The sample items are generally ones actually used in the assessment instruments, with the following changes made for clarity in this presentation:

1. The correct answer is marked with a number sign (#).
2. Directions are included with each item. In the actual instrument for grades 1 and 2, directions are printed separately for the teacher to read to students; in addition, more specific instructions are provided at the early levels; e.g., "Look at number _____."

Teachers are also encouraged to read (and explain) directions if students do not understand them. Teachers are permitted to help students if they do not understand how to do a task, so long as the "help" does not cue students directly to the correct response. Additionally, item stimuli that consist of literary selections (e.g., a story, a poem) are to be read aloud by the teacher.

The vocabulary used is found in the Harris and Jacobson word list.* Although the policy established for vocabulary control required words listed at grades below the level of assessment, this constraint was not strictly applied for Literature because the items are read by the teacher. Although a few words in the items may not be in students' reading vocabularies, these words should be well within student's oral vocabularies.

The Harris and Jacobson list does not contain a number of technical terms needed for directions (e.g., metaphor, personification). Such words were avoided where possible, but using them was necessary in many cases. In some instances the technical terms were used at the district's request, despite the availability of acceptable synonyms.

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*Harris, A. L., & Jacobson, M. D. Basic elementary reading vocabularies. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

The assessment specifications are presented below. In general, these specifications are those originally submitted to the district because they are considered the most appropriate match for classroom instruction and student ability.

In addition to the Literature objectives covered in Part VII, other areas of language-arts assessment are described in the following documents:

Part I:	Listening
Part II:	Grammar Usage
Part III:	Sentence Structure
Part IV:	Capitalization and Punctuation
Part V:	Language Expression
Part VI:	Spelling
Part VIII:	Study Skills, Mass Media, and Nonverbal Communication.

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SPECIFICATIONS

OBJECTIVE 1

Recall details in a story.

Assessment Levels: 1A and 1B

CONTENT

The student identifies details that are part of a story presented orally by the teacher. The story is a short narrative with enough detail for asking factual wh questions (who, what, where, when) about the content of the story.

The difficulty of the distractors differentiates between 1A and 1B content.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a simple story that the teacher reads aloud and the students follow in their own booklets. The teacher asks questions about details in the story. Each question and two answer choices--short phrases--are in the test booklet. The student selects the phrase that correctly answers the question. For Level 1A, the distractor is a plausible answer, but one not directly related to the content of the story. For Level 1B, the distractor includes a key word in the story.

ITEMS

Level 1A

Directions: Listen to the story. After I read the story, I will ask some questions about it.

One morning Tom went for a walk on the farm. He was picking some flowers when he saw a cat lying in the grass. "Hello, Mr. Cat," said Tom.

The cat said, "Hello, Tom. Isn't this a fine morning?"

Tom was so surprised that he dropped his flowers. "Yes, it is a fine morning," he said, "but I didn't know that cats could talk."

Listen to each question and choose the right answer.

1. When did Tom go for a walk?

in the morning	at night
#0	0

2. Where was Tom?

on a farm — in a house
#0 — 0

Level 1B

Directions: Listen to the story. After I read the story, I will ask some questions about it.

Judy had a big tree outside her house. One morning she saw something yellow shining through the green leaves. She ran out to the tree. A big yellow balloon was tied to a tree branch. The balloon carried a note. "Come to the picnic at 2 o'clock," it said.

Listen to each question and choose the right answer.

1. Where was the balloon?

in the house — in the tree
0 — #0

2. What color was the balloon?

yellow — green
#0 — 0

OBJECTIVE 2

Distinguish between real and make believe.

Assessment Level: 1B

CONTENT

The student distinguishes between real animals and make-believe animals. Make-believe animals, such as those found in fairy tales, have anthropomorphic characteristics (e.g., the ability to talk).

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus consists of two pictures. One picture is a photograph of a common animal (dog, cat, mouse). Actual photographs are necessary since students may interpret drawings of real animals as not real. The other picture is of a "make-believe" animal: a drawing of the same kind of animal, either dressed in clothes, or acting as a human being, or both (dog reading, cat holding a glass and drinking milk).

The student identifies either the real or the make-believe animal.

ITEM

Directions: Look at the two pictures. Which picture shows a real animal?

1.	[picture: photograph of a real chicken]	[picture: cartoon drawing of a chicken wearing a dress, carrying a basket (as the "little red hen")]
	#0	0

OBJECTIVE 3

Identify elements of a fairy tale.

Assessment Level: 2A

CONTENT

The student identifies elements that commonly belong to the realm of fairy tales. Common elements that students should be familiar with include the following:

beginning ("Once upon a time")
happy ending ("They lived happily ever after")
human characters with superhuman and heroic qualities
animal characters with human or superhuman qualities
characters with only good qualities
villains
fairy tale characters (e.g., witch, dragon, prince, princess, queen, king, knight)
magic
number symbolism (e.g., three wishes, seven swans)

Comment: Two factors constrain the assessment of this objective. First, knowledge of the elements in fairy tales depends on exposure to fairy tales. Students hear and read many stories, but a heritage of fairy tales may not be part of their personal experience. Consequently, students may not understand the difference between a fairy tale and a story based on fact or realistic circumstances. The second constraining factor is that almost anything can be an element or excerpt of a fairy tale. Therefore, when the student is presented with an element of a fairy tale and a realistic object or event, the student may decide that the realistic object/event does belong in a fairy tale.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with questions about elements that typically belong in a fairy tale. The teacher reads the questions to the students, and the students select their answers from two alternatives. The correct response is a phrase or sentence describing a typical element of a fairy tale; the distractor is a phrase or sentence describing a realistic or factual object or event.

ITEM

Directions: Think about the fairy tales you know. Think about the kinds of things that happen in fairy tales. Now listen to each question and choose the right answer.

1. Which might you find in a fairy tale?

a TV show	a magic ring
0	#0

OBJECTIVE 4

Identify words and phrases which create imagery.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student identifies words and phrases that contribute to imagery in poetry. Imagery is the use of words that typically appeal to senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. The words used may appeal to more than one sense simultaneously, but usually one sense is stronger, as indicated by these examples:

sight: snow-capped mountains, sparkling blue lake, neon lights

hearing: bird singing, steam escaping through a narrow hole, vacuum cleaner humming, children shouting

touch: sand paper, bark of tree, cool water, baby's silky hair

smell: wood burning, freshly baked cake, perfume

taste: tartness of lemon, sweetness of honey, saltiness of pretzels

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a poem that the teacher reads aloud and the students follow in their own booklets. The teacher reads the question, and the student selects the answer from three alternatives. Each answer choice is a line from the poem; the correct answer choice has several descriptive terms that appeal to the senses, and the distractors are lines without any imagery.

ITEM

Directions: Read along and listen carefully to the poem. Then answer the question.

1. RAIN SOUNDS

Tires swishing on a wet street
Make a special sound.
I look out the window,
The rain is coming down!

Drops tapping on a trash can
Before they hit the ground.
Tap-tap, swish-swish,
I like to hear those sounds.

Which words in this poem help us to hear the sounds that the poem is about?

A. I look out the window.
#B. Tap-tap, swish-swish
C. Before they hit the ground.

OBJECTIVE 5

Identify the moral choice of a fable.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student identifies the moral in a fable. A fable is a short, simple story designed to teach a moral truth. The characters are usually animals, although people or inanimate objects can also be used as central figures. The subject matter is often based on folklore and frequently deals with supernatural incidents. The moral truth in a fable is typically a lesson in human values (a deceiver cannot be trusted; physical qualities are often not important; by helping someone you help yourself).

Comment: The word moral is not used in the assessment; instead, the student is asked to identify the lesson of the fable.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a fable that the teacher reads aloud and the students follow in their own booklets. The teacher reads the questions, and the student selects the moral of the story from three alternatives. The correct answer choice is an inferential interpretation based on the collective events in the story, while the distractors are literal interpretations of story details.

ITEM

Directions: Listen carefully to this fable. Then answer the question.

1. THE GOAT AND THE MONKEY

A monkey saw a man resting under a tree. The man had a bag of bananas under his arm. The monkey was trying to think of a way to steal the bananas from the man when a big goat came along.

The monkey said to the goat, "Chase that man down the road. I will grab the bananas, and I will give you half of them when you come back."

The goat agreed. She chased the man down the road. The monkey quickly grabbed the bananas and climbed up into a high tree.

Soon the goat came back. She was tired and hungry from chasing the man. She called up to the monkey, "I did my job. Now give me half of the bananas."

The monkey, laughing, threw down only empty banana skins and said, "Here is your share!"

What is the lesson of this fable?

A. You should watch out for giants when you are walking on the road.
#B. You should not trust someone who steals.
C. You should not eat bananas.

OBJECTIVE 6

Identify sensory elements in poetry.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student identifies, in poems, the words that appeal to the senses. Such sensory words appeal to the reader's sight, hearing, touch, smell, or taste.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a poem that the teacher reads aloud and the students follow in their own booklets. The poem is rich in words and phrases that create sensory impressions. The questions ask the student to identify the sense to which the poem appeals. The student selects the answer from three alternatives.

> Comment: Sensory words and phrases can appeal to more than one sense at a time, but usually the appeal is strongest for one sense. Distractors are carefully chosen so that there will be no ambiguity.

ITEM

Directions: Read along and listen carefully to the poem. Then answer the question.

1. PLAYING IN THE SNOW

The cold sneaks up inside my sleeves.
It stings my nose and makes me sneeze.
My gloves are wet; my lips are blue.
My toes are like ice; oh, what shall I do?

Which sense does this poem tell about?

A. tasting
#B. feeling
C. smelling

OBJECTIVE 7

Identify onomatopoeia.

Assessment Level: 3B

CONTENT

The student identifies words that create onomatopoeia. Onomatopoetic words suggest, by their sounds, the object or idea being named. Therefore, these words imitate the sounds made by the objects they describe, as these examples indicate: sewing maching humming, cat purring, snow crunching, rain tapping against the window.

Knowledge of the technical term onomatopoeia is not prerequisite to this objective; rather, students must understand the notion of a word that imitates the sound an object makes.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus consists of a sentence in which an onomatopoetic word describes the action. The student selects the word that imitates the sound the object makes. There are two distractors, each a word taken from the same sentence.

ITEM

Directions: Read each sentence. Listen for a word that sounds like the noise it describes. Which word in the sentence sounds like the noise it describes?

1. A bee was buzzing around the flowers.

A. bee
#B. buzzing
C. flowers

OBJECTIVE 8

Distinguish between biography and autobiography.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student identifies features that are characteristic of both a biography and an autobiography. The student also identifies the feature that differentiates the two genres.

Both biography and autobiography are factual accounts of a person's life history, giving insights into the character of that person. Both forms may also include other people who are significant in the life that is documented in the narrative. The feature that distinguishes autobiography from biography is the author: An autobiography is written by the person him- or herself, whereas a biography is written about the person by someone else.

Knowledge of the terms biography and autobiography is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Two item types are assessed. The stimulus for the first item type is the subject of a sentence with a blank replacing the complete predicate. The student selects the predicate that completes the sentence, making it a true statement about biography and/or autobiography, or about autobiography alone. Item 1 assesses the student's ability to identify features that are characteristic of both biography and autobiography. The distractor for this item is a feature that contrasts with the correct answer (e.g., make-believe person/real person). Items 2 and 3 assess the student's ability to differentiate between biography and autobiography. Thus the distractor is a feature of the other literary form.

The second item type also assesses the student's ability to differentiate between autobiography and biography. For this item type, two sentences are presented to the student, who selects the one that would be found in an autobiography. The correct answer is a sentence written in first-person construction. The distractor is written in third-person construction, which is characteristic of biography rather than autobiography.

ITEMS

Directions: Complete the sentence.

1. A biography and an autobiography __________.

A. tell about a make-believe person
#B. tell about a real person

2. A biography of a person ________________.

A. is written by the person himself or herself
#B. is written by someone else

3. In an autobiography, the writer __________.

#A. tells about his or her own life
B. tells about someone else's life

Directions: Which sentence would be found in an autobiography?

4. #A. I was born on a farm in Iowa.
B. Abe Lincoln was born in Kentucky.

OBJECTIVE 9

Distinguish between similes and metaphors.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student identifies the form and meaning of similes and metaphors and differentiates between them. Similes and metaphors are common figures of speech. Both similes and metaphors are used to make vivid, imaginative comparisons between two entities.

In a simile, two unlike entities are compared to each other, usually by using the words as or like (Her cheeks were like red apples); the second entity has some attribute that is also characteristic of the first entity (redness of apple and cheeks). In a metaphor, the first entity is referred to as the second entity (Her cheeks were red apples). Thus, some attribute, inherent in one entity, is ascribed to another, unlike entity.

> Comment: Abstractions can also be comparison elements for simile and metaphor construction, but this type is not covered in instruction and is probably too difficult for students at this grade level.

Knowledge of the terms simile and metaphor is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus consists of two sentences, one with a metaphor and one with a simile. The student identifies the sentence with a simile (in item 1) or a metaphor (in item 2). Thus simile and metaphor serve as distractors for each other.

ITEMS

Directions: Which sentence has a simile?

1. A. The sun was fire.
   #B. The sun was like fire.

Directions: Which sentence uses a metaphor?

2. #A. Mr. Fields is a giant.
   B. Mr. Fields is as big as a giant.

OBJECTIVE 10

Identify personification.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student identifies characteristics and examples of personification. Personification is a figure of speech in which ideas, objectives, or non-human entities are given human form, character, capabilities, and/or emotions.

Knowledge of the term personification is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a set of three sentences, related by their reference to the same natural phenomenon (i.e., rain and rainbows in item 1). The student selects the sentence that contains personification. The distractors are sentences that do not contain personification. One distractor has a named person as the subject of the sentence. The other distractor has the natural phenomenon as the subject.

ITEM

Directions: Which sentence uses personification?

1. #A. The sun kicked away the morning clouds.
   B. The sun is bright now, and the sky is blue.
   C. Judy stands in the sunshine and smiles.

OBJECTIVE 11

Identify alliteration.

Assessment Level: 5A

CONTENT

The student identifies sentences that contain examples of alliteration. Alliteration is a literary device, typically used in poetry and sometimes in prose. This device involves the repetition of an initial sound in two or more words that may be part of a phrase, a sentence, or a larger unit of discourse. Tongue twisters are good examples of alliteration (e.g., Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers).

Knowledge of the term alliteration is prerequisite to this objective.

Comment: Although alliteration sometimes refers to the repetition of either consonant or vowel sounds, some authorities distinguish between them, using the term alliteration only for consonants and assonance for vowels. Through instruction, the student is mainly exposed to alliteration by consonant sounds, which, correspondingly, is the content assessed for this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus consists of a set of three sentences, one of which is an example of alliteration. The student identifies that sentence. The distractors are sentences with related meanings, but with no alliteration.

ITEM

Directions: Which sentence is an example of alliteration?

1. A. The yellow butterfly spread its wings and flew away.
   #B. The bright brown butterfly flew below the blue blossoms.
   C. The butterfly rested on a piece of grass.

OBJECTIVE 12

Identify a myth.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student identifies characteristics of myths. A myth is a story based on folk beliefs. Myths often present supernatural events in an attempt to explain natural phenomena or to record the adventures of cultural heroes. In a myth, the folk history, customs, and beliefs of a cultural group are interwoven with stories about gods, heroes, and animals. In the instructional guide, the student is introduced to two types of myths: animal myths (e.g., How the Bear Lost Its Tail) and myths involving gods, heroes, and supernatural animals (e.g., Norse and Greek myths).

Knowledge of the term myth is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank. The student selects the answer that fills in the blank to complete the sentence. The correct answer is a characteristic of a myth, while distractors pertain to other genres.

ITEM

Directions: Which answer completes the sentence?

1. A myth is ____________.

#A. a made-up story
B. a true story
C. a newspaper report

OBJECTIVE 13

Identify a legend.

Assessment Level: 5B

CONTENT

The student identifies characteristics of a legend. A legend is a fictitious tale associated with a real person, event, or place. A legend often incorporates the customs and ideals of the cultural group to which the legend is indigenous. The main character of a legend often possesses superhuman qualities.

Knowledge of the terms legend and hero is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a sentence with a blank. The student selects the answer that correctly completes the sentence. The correct answer is a characteristic of a legend, while distractors pertain to other genres.

ITEM

Directions: Which answer completes the sentence?

1. A legend has __________.

#A. a strong hero
B. a weak hero
C. no hero

OBJECTIVE 14

Identify exaggeration in a tall tale.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student identifies exaggeration in a tall tale--a humorous narrative that magnifies events beyond the limits of truth. Exaggeration is effectuated through extravagant statements or figures of speech that cannot be interpreted literally.

Knowledge of the term exaggeration is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a tall tale that the teachers read and students follow in their booklets. The student identifies an example of exaggeration in the tale. Distractors are statements of literal content in the story.

ITEM

Directions: Read the story and answer the question.

1. An old lumberjack told this tall tale:

"Once I saw the silverwing. This bird has such shiny, sparkling wings that it can only fly at night, and even then the wings light up the whole forest. You can get a mighty good tan if the bird flies over you."

Which one is an exaggeration?

#A. a bird so bright that it gives you a suntan
B. a bird that flies at night
C. a bird that lives in the forest

OBJECTIVE 15

Distinguish between fiction and non-fiction.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student distinguishes between fictional and non-fictional narratives. Although fiction may be based on fact or on history, it always contains imagined components. Fiction typically has imaginary characters and a plot with a conclusion, but the setting may be unspecified. Fairy tales, fables, short stories, and novels are examples of fiction. In contrast, non-fiction is based on real events and tends to have real characters and a specified setting, but no plot and an ending rather than a conclusion.

> Comment: Since events or people in fiction may seem real, the student must be aware of the factual nature of an event or person in order to identify non-fiction (e.g., the student must know that Benjamin Franklin really existed in order to identify item 1 as non-fiction).

Knowledge of the terms fiction and non-fiction is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a paragraph based on fact or fiction. The paragraph is read by the teacher as students follow along in their booklets. The student identifies the type of writing the paragraph represents. The answer choices are fiction and non-fiction. Thus fiction and non-fiction serve as distractors for each other.

ITEM

Directions: Read the story and answer the question.

1. Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston in 1706. As a young boy he helped in his father's candle and soap shop. When Benjamin was 12 years old, he started working in the printshop of his brother James. Benjamin became a good printer. When he was 17 years old, he ran away to Philadelphia, where he worked for many printers. He opened his own printshop in 1730.

   This story is _________.

   A. fiction
   #B. non-fiction

OBJECTIVE 16

Identify the point of view in an essay.

Assessment Level: 6B

CONTENT

The student identifies the author's point of view in an essay. The student also identifies essay details that support the point of view. A point of view represents a specified position or opinion in a piece of writing. It frequently involves an author's feeling and attitude towards the subject matter. In the instructional guide, the student is taught to recognize the purpose of a piece of writing, its main point, and details that support that main point.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is an essay that the teacher reads and students follow in their booklets. The essay represents a view on an issue. The student answers questions about the essay. The questions ask for the general point of view of the writer, for specific details that support that point of view, and for the purpose in writing. The point-of-view questions have three choices: for, against, and neutral. For the supporting-detail question, the distractors are opposing details derived from the essay.

ITEMS

Directions: Read the paragraphs. As you read, think about the author's point of view. Then answer the questions.

This is what Linda wrote:

The bald eagles are coming back to our mountains. Last year we had fourteen, and this year we have counted twenty-one of them. I think that the main reason for their return is the fact that the Forest Service has closed Goosecreek Camp. That is where the eagles like to nest and raise their young ones. I think the Forest Service should be thanked for bringing our magnificent bald eagle back. I hope the rangers keep up the good work and keep Goosecreek Camp closed.

1. What does Linda think about the campground?

A. She is against the closing of the campground.
#B. She is for the closing of the campground.
C. She does not care what happens to the campground.

2. How does she support her opinion?

   #A. She writes that there are more eagles since the camp has been closed.
   B. She writes that the Forest Service has not helped the eagles.
   C. She writes that eagles are not good for the camp.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT PART VIII: STUDY SKILLS, MASS MEDIA, AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Ann Humes, Joseph Lawlor, Larry Gentry, Bruce Cronnell, and Laila Fiege-Kollmann

ABSTRACT

The specifications reflect the elementary schooling intentions of a large metropolitan school district. The specifications include content descriptions, item descriptions that detail the construction of appropriate assessment items, and sample items for assessing the objectives.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITEM SPECIFICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT
PART VIII: STUDY SKILLS, MASS MEDIA, AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Ann Humes, Joseph Lawlor, Larry Gentry, Bruce Cronnell, and Laila Fiege-Kollmann

Working in collaboration with a large metropolitan school district, SWRL developed assessment instruments for language arts for each semester (A and B) of Levels 1-6 (i.e., grades 1-6) in the district's elementary schools. This paper provides detailed specifications for one large category of objectives in the core curriculum that is described in the district's instructional guide. In the first section of the paper, background for the project is provided. This background includes a discussion of some of the activities SWRL staff engaged in prior to constructing the assessment specifications; it also outlines the types of information and material included in the language-arts specifications. The background is followed by specifications for the objectives in the Study Skills, Mass Media, and Nonverbal Communication categories.

BACKGROUND

Presented with a list of language-arts objectives to be assessed by a large metropolitan school district, SWRL responded to the list before writing actual specifications and items. This response pointed out overlaps between reading and language arts objectives and recommended that some objectives be deleted from assessment. These deletions were recommended (1) when objectives were assessed by the same skill at a different semester or by another skill in the specifications, or (2) when the skill did not lend itself to large-scale assessment.

SWRL also described the assessment differences for objectives that had been listed by the district for testing at more than one semester.

For some of these objectives, differences in content could be described; for other objectives, assessment could only be differentiated by the type of format or the vocabulary level used for the items. SWRL also commented that some objectives, on the basis of SWRL's analyses of textbook presentation, seemed to be specified for assessment at a grade that might be too early for mastery.

In responding to SWRL's recommendations, the district moved some objectives to higher grades and deleted others. The district also considered many of the differentiations SWRL had proposed for objectives listed for assessment at more than one semester. However, district people ultimately decided not to differentiate between semesters of assessment, but to assess the whole objective for every semester at which that objective was listed.

Specifications and items were then prepared by SWRL staff. These specifications were primarily based on an analysis of the district's instructional guide. For each assessed objective, specifications include content descriptions that note factors involved in the use of each objective, including other inherent skills and prerequisite knowledge. Each content description is followed by an item description. The item description explains both the item stimulus and the answer choices. The item description also notes any other important considerations relevant to assessing an objective in the particular item format. At least one sample item is then presented for each objective; more items are included in the case of items that are interrelated by format or content. These sample items are generally ones actually used in the assessment instruments, with the following changes made for clarity in this presentation:

1. The correct answer is marked with a number sign (#).
2. Directions are included with each item. In the actual instrument for grades 1 and 2, directions are printed separately for the teacher to read to students; in addition, more specific instructions are provided at the early levels; e.g., "Look at number __."

Additionally, teachers are encouraged to read (and explain) directions if students do not understand them. Teachers are also permitted to help students if they do not understand how to do a task so long as the help does not cue students directly to the correct response.

The vocabulary used is found in the Harris and Jacobson word list.* The words used for the A-level surveys are generally those listed at two or more grades below the level of assessment. The words for the B-level surveys are those listed for one or more grade levels below. Such vocabulary control helps ensure that reading ability is not a primary factor in determining students' language-arts success.

The Harris and Jacobson list does not contain a number of technical terms needed for the assessment (e.g., sentence, glossary). Such words were avoided where possible, but using them was necessary in many cases. In some instances the technical terms were used at the district's request, despite the availability of acceptable synonyms.

The assessment specifications are presented below. In general, these specifications are those originally submitted to the district because they are considered the most appropriate match for classroom instruction and student ability.

In addition to the objectives covered in Part VIII, other areas of language-arts assessment are described in the following documents:

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*Harris, A. L., & Jacobson, M. D. Basic elementary reading vocabularies. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

Part I: Listening
Part II: Grammar Usage
Part III: Sentence Structure
Part IV: Capitalization and Punctuation
Part V: Language Expression
Part VI: Spelling
Part VII: Literature

Index of Specifications

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SPECIFICATIONS FOR STUDY SKILLS

OBJECTIVE 1

Identify the parts of the Five Step Study Method for Spelling.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student identifies the following steps of the Five Step Study Method for Spelling, as specified in the instructional guide:

a. Look at the word.
b. Say the word.
c. Say the parts of the word.
d. Write the word.
e. Compare your spelling word with the word on the list.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The item consists of three imperative sentences that indicate ways by which a word might be studied. The student chooses the sentence that is not one of the steps in the Five Step Study Method for Spelling. The correct answer (A in the following item) is a sentence describing how a word might be studied, but is not one of the five steps. Distractors are two of the five steps.

ITEM

Directions: Which sentence is not one of the steps in the Five Step Study Method for Spelling?

1. #A. Draw a picture of the word.
B. Say the parts of the word.
C. Look at the word.

OBJECTIVE 2

Identify information on two types of graphs.

Assessment Level: 3A

CONTENT

The student answers questions about the information contained in (1) simple bar graphs and (2) pictoral maps.

> Comment: Maps are not generally considered to be "graphs"; rather, they are "graphic aids" (as labeled in the instructional guide).

ITEM DESCRIPTION

(1) Bar graphs: The stimulus consists of a story describing three or more people doing something that involves quantification (e.g., reading: number of books; running: number of miles). The story is accompanied by a bar graph indicating item/event frequency for each person in the story. The student answers questions about the information contained in the graph. Three question types may be used:

a. Questions about relative quantities (e.g., Who has the most/ least . . .?). (Note: Neither most nor least is on the prescribed vocabulary list for this level.) The correct answer is the name of one person in the story. Distractors are the names of two other people in the story.

b. Questions about absolute quantities (e.g., Who has five . . .?). The correct answer is the name of one person in the story. Distractors are the names of two other people in the story.

c. Questions about the people in the story (e.g., How many does Ann have?). The correct answer is the appropriate number on the graph for that person. Distractors are two other numbers on the graph: one that is the frequency for another person in the story; one that is the frequency for no one in the story, but is a number close to the answer. Both of these distractor numbers are greater than the correct answer since a lesser number would be included in the correct answer (e.g., if Ann has five things, she also has four things).

(2) Maps: The stimulus is a simple pictoral map consisting of several city streets and several labeled and illustrated buildings (e.g., houses, school) and other places (e.g., parks). (The streets are labeled if question type d below is used.) The student answers questions about the information contained in the map. Five question types may be used:

a. "Which one is closest to/farthest from X?" (Note: Neither closest nor farthest is on the prescribed vocabulary list for this level.) The correct answer is the name of the appropriate place. Distractors are the names of two places that are farther from/nearer to the point of reference (i.e., "X").

b. "How many blocks are there from X to Y?" The correct number is the smallest number of blocks between the two places. Distractors are two numbers: one that is less than the correct answer (but not a possible distance between the two places); one that is greater than the correct answer (but one that is unlikely--if not impossible--as a distance between the two places).

c. "How many X's are there?" The correct answer is a number. Distractors are two numbers that indicate the frequency of other items in the map.

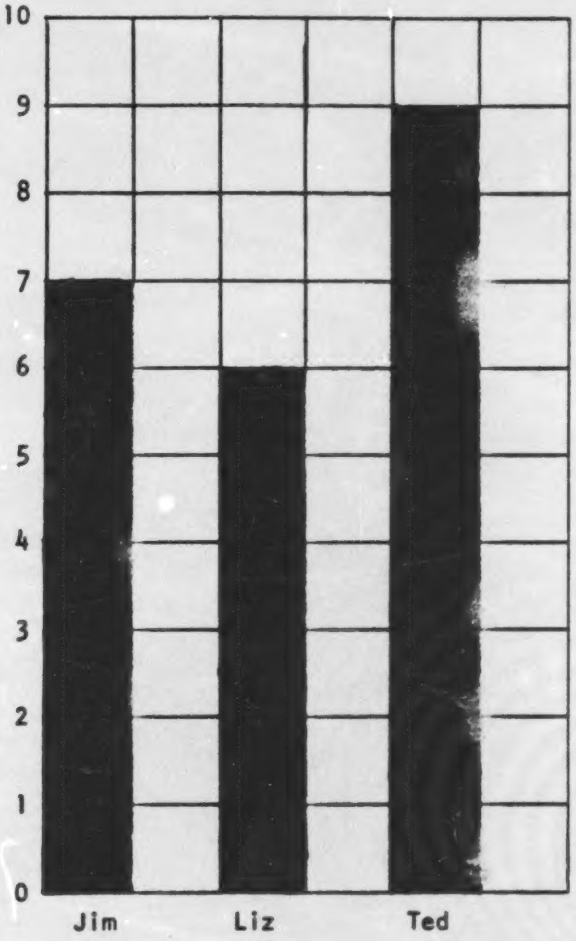
d. "What street is X on?" The correct answer is the street name. Distractors are the names of two nearby streets. For this question type, the building, etc., being located is unambiguously located on only one street (i.e., not on a corner, not with front on one street and back on another).

e. "What is next to/across the street from/etc., X?" The correct answer is the name of the appropriate building, etc. Distractors are the names of two other places on the map: one that is near the correct answer, but in a different relationship to it (e.g., "next to" rather than "across the street from"); one that is distant from the correct answer.

ITEMS

Directions: Jim, Liz, and Ted painted pictures all morning. Then they wanted to see how many pictures they had painted. This graph shows how many pictures the children painted.

Look at the graph and answer the questions.



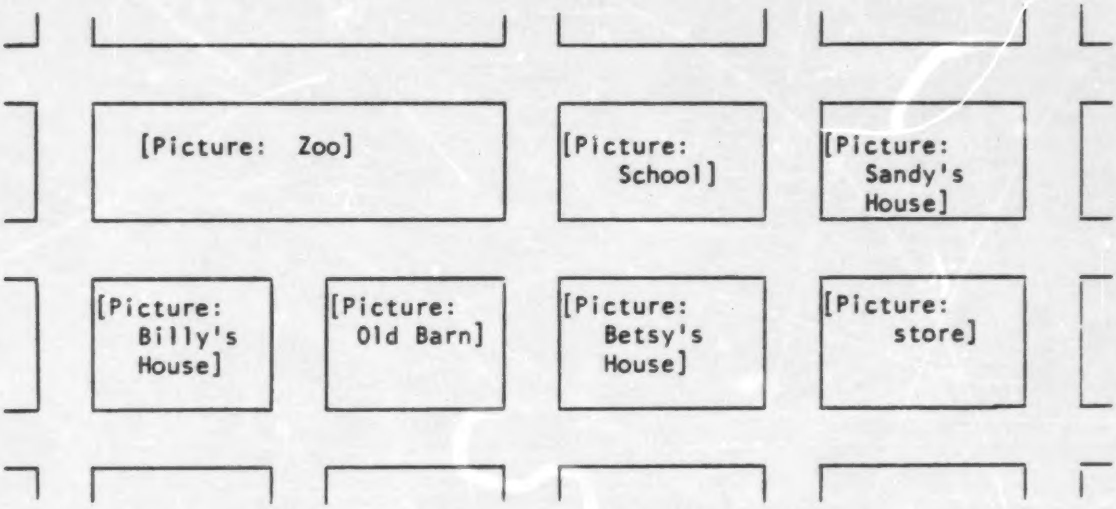
1. Who painted the most pictures?

A. Jim
B. Liz
#C. Ted

2. How many pictures did Liz paint?

   #A. 6
   B. 7
   C. 8

Directions: Look at this map and answer the questions.


[Picture: Zoo]
[Picture: School]
[Picture: Sandy's House]
[Picture: Billy's House]
[Picture: Old Barn]
[Picture: Betsy's House]
[Picture: store]

3. Which one is closest to the store?

   A. the zoo
   #B. the school
   C. the old barn

4. How many blocks are there from Billy's house to Sandy's house?

   A. 6
   B. 1
   #C. 3

OBJECTIVE 3

Identify the parts of a book.

Assessment Level: 4A

CONTENT

The student identifies the names of specific parts of a book. The parts may be the physical components of a book (cover, spine, text), or the organization of text within a book (title page, index, glossary, table of contents).

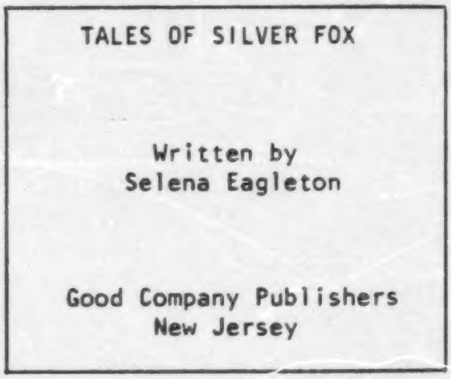
Knowledge of the terms spine, text, title, cover, index, table of contents, and glossary is prerequisite to this objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimuli are facsimile pages from books typically seen in the classroom, including a title page, a table of contents, and an index. The student identifies the page from three choices. The distractors are other book parts.

ITEMS

Directions: Look at the pages of the books below. Answer the questions.



TALES OF SILVER FOX

Written by
Selena Eagleton

Good Company Publishers
New Jersey

1. What is this page called?

#A. a title page
B. a glossary
C. an index

This is a page from the book Tales of Silver Fox. It shows the stories found in the book.

Dogs of the Forest	5
Bear Hunt	13
Games by the Sea	35
The New Horse	61

2. What is this page of the book called?

   A. a title page
   #B. a table of contents
   C. a glossary

OBJECTIVE 4

Identify guide words.

Assessment Levels: 4A and 4B

CONTENT

The student identifies the location, name, and identity of guide words in a dictionary. Guide words indicate the first and last word on the page. By using guide words, the student locates a specific word in a dictionary. In the instructional guide, these words are listed as a pair located at the outside top corner of each page, above the entries. At Level 4A, items require the student to identify location, name, and identity of guide words; at Level 4B, items require the student to use the guide words in locating other words.

Implicit in this objective at Level 4B is the ability to alphabetize. In the instructional guide, students are required to alphabetize to the third letter.

Knowledge of the terms dictionary, guide words, entry word, and column is prerequisite to this skill.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

At Level 4A, the stimulus is an open dictionary with guide words on top of each page. The student answers questions about the name, location, and function of the guide words. The distractors are contrasting, but related, features of the correct choice.

At Level 4B, the stimulus is a set of three mock dictionary pages in consecutive order. Each page has guide words at the top right- or left-hand corner and the page number in the center at the bottom. The rest of the page is unreadable. The student identifies the page on which a specific word would appear. The three page numbers, in order, are the answer choices.

ITEMS

Level 4A

Directions: The open dictionary shows pairs of words on each page. Look at the words and answer the questions.

[picture of dictionary with guide-word pairs at top corners]

1. Where are these words?

   #A. at the top of each outside column
   B. at the top of each inside column
   C. at the bottom of each page

2. What are these words called?

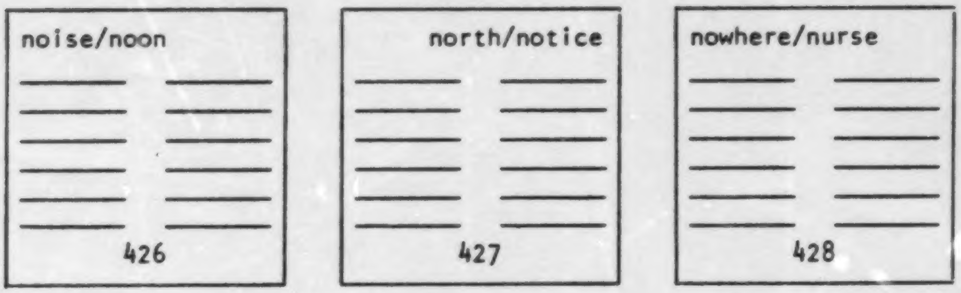
   A. pronunciation keys
   #B. guide words
   C. entry words

3. What does the first guide word show?

   A. the last word on the dictionary page
   B. how each word is pronounced
   #C. the first word on the dictionary page

Level 4B

Directions: These are pages from a dictionary. Use the guide words to answer the questions.



1. Where would you find the word nose?

   A. on page 426
   #B. on page 427
   C. on page 428

OBJECTIVE 5

Identify the correct meaning of words.

Assessment Level: 5A and 5B

CONTENT

The student identifies the meaning of a word, given words that have multiple meanings.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus consists of two multiple-meaning words and their definitions. The student reads a sentence containing one of the words and identifies the correct meaning. The distractor is the other meaning.

ITEM

Directions: Here are two words and their definitions. Use them when you answer the questions.

ball: 1. a round object
2. a dance

hand: to give to someone

hand: 1. a part of the body
2. a part of a clock

What is the meaning of the word ball in these sentences?

1. We had a lot of fun at the ball.

A. a round object
#B. a dance

2. Sharon caught the ball that I threw.

#A. a round object
B. a dance

OBJECTIVE 6

Demonstrate the use of encyclopedia as a resource.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student understands the uses and content of an encyclopedia and demonstrates the ability to use a set of encyclopedias as a resource by identifying the appropriate volume for locating information about a given topic.

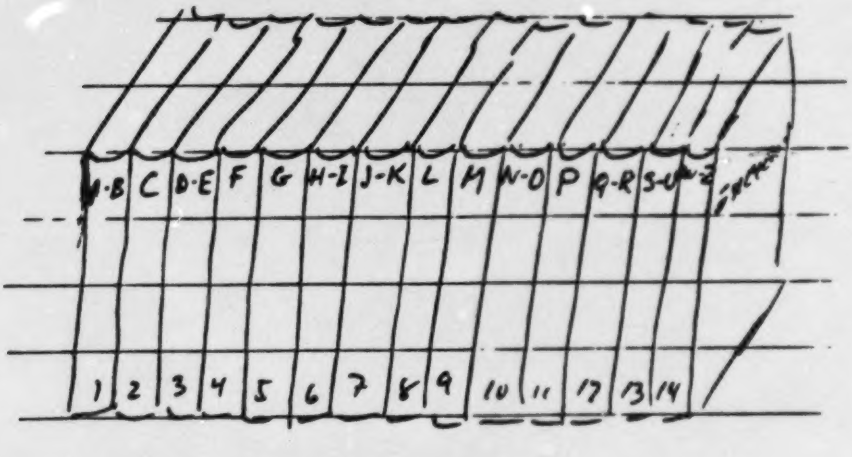
Comment: Implicit in this objective is the ability to alphabetize.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The student is presented with a picture of a set of encyclopedias and questions about specific topics. The student identifies the appropriate volume or volumes for each topic. The topics are found in one or two volumes. If the topic is a person and both first and surnames are given, the student identifies the volume by surname (Abraham Lincoln); if the topic is a two-word name of an object, the student locates the topic by the first word (Estes Peak); if the topic contains more than one topic heading, the student finds that topic in more than one volume (Is Estes Peak in Colorado?). The distractors are other numbered volumes.

ITEM

Directions: Which encyclopedia volume or volumes would be best to look into to find the answer to the question?



1. What is a Ferris wheel?

   #A. Volume 4
   B. Volume 6
   C. Volume 14

SPECIFICATIONS FOR MASS MEDIA

OBJECTIVE 1

Identify types of mass media.

Assessment Level: 4B

CONTENT

The student (1) identifies communication media that are intended for mass audiences and (2) discriminates print media from non-print media.

The student understands that the following communication media, as specified in the instructional guide, are intended for mass audiences and fall under the blanket term "mass media":

- books
- journals
- magazines
- motion pictures
- newspapers
- photographs
- radio
- records
- signs
- tapes
- television

The student further understands that the various forms of mass media can be further categorized into two major classifications: print and non-print. As specified in the instructional guide, the two major classifications include the following media:

Print	Non-Print
books	films
journals	radio
magazines	records
newspapers	tapes
signs	television

Comments: Photographs are not placed in either category in instruction. The terms film and motion picture are used interchangeably in the instructional guide.

Although assessment in the instructional guide requires students to identify the type of mass media in which certain information can be found, the instruction does not. Therefore, the items provided here do not ask for this kind of identification.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The two skills that form a part of the instruction for this objective are assessed. In the first item type, the student selects the medium of communication that is a form of mass media. The distractors are media that are intended for a limited audience only.

In the second item type, the student selects the medium of communication that is a "printed" type of mass media. The correct answer is a medium that requires the reading of text by the consumer. The distractors are media that entail either auditory or visual stimuli, but not print.

ITEMS

Directions: Which is a kind of mass media?

1. A. a letter to a friend
   #B. a television show
   C. a secret message

Directions: Which is a printed form of mass media?

1. A. a cartoon on television
   B. a radio show
   #C. a magazine

OBJECTIVE 2

Identify the parts of a newspaper.

Assessment Level: 6A

CONTENT

The student identifies content that is appropriate to the various parts of a newspaper. The student understands that a newspaper contains various sections and that each section devotes most of its space to specialized topics. The student also understands the nomenclature used in identifying the various sections of a newspaper, and is acquainted with the purpose of a headline. The following are the parts of a newspaper listed in the instructional guide:

- advertisements
- classified information
- comics
- editorials
- editorial cartoons
- entertainment
- headlines
- homemaking news
- international news
- letters to the editor
- local news
- national news
- real estate news
- sports news
- women's news

Comment: Although the objective suggests a "naming" or discrimination task, the instructional guide focuses on identification of content within the various parts of a newspaper.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is an incomplete sentence that provides the student with the name of a particular part or section of a newspaper. The student completes the sentence by choosing one of three phrases as the correct answer. The correct answer is a phrase that refers to explicit content that is most appropriate to the newspaper section mentioned in the stimulus. The distractors are phrases that refer to content that is not appropriate to the identified section. Distractors that refer to content frequently found in various sections of a newspaper are not employed (e.g., cartoons are frequently found in comic strips, editorial pages, and sports sections).

ITEM

Directions: Which words finish the sentence?

1. The headline of a newspaper story tells ________.

A. about the writer of the story
#B. what the article will be about
C. about nothing in the story

SPECIFICATIONS FOR NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

OBJECTIVE 1

Identify meanings conveyed by facial expressions.

Assessment Levels: 1A and 1B

CONTENT

The student identifies the emotions conveyed by facial expressions. At Level 1A, the student is expected to distinguish among pictures of a happy face, a fearful face, and a sad face. At Level 1B, the student is expected to distinguish among an angry face, a sleepy face, and a surprised face.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a series of three pictures. The student identifies the picture of the face specified in the directions. Distractors are pictures of other facial expressions.

ITEM

Directions: Which picture shows a sad face?

1. [picture: happy face] [picture: fearful face]
0 0

[picture: sad face]
#0

OBJECTIVE 2

Identify meanings conveyed by signs.

Assessment Levels: 1A and 1B

CONTENT

The student identifies the meanings conveyed by common road signs. At Level 1A, the student is expected to identify the following signs: stop, one way, men working, railroad crossing, and do not enter. At Level 1B, the student is expected to identify the following signs: detour, slippery, curve, yield, and caution.

Comments: Most of the signs used in the instructional guide are identified by the words written on them. Consequently, performance on this objective is dependent upon reading ability, as well as ability to recognize signs by shape.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a set of three pictures of road signs. The student identifies the picture of the road sign specified in the directions. Distractors are pictures of other road signs. Distractor use is subject to the following constraints:

1) Stop and do not enter signs are not used as distractors for one another because the meaning conveyed by both signs is similar. That is, a motorist who encounters a do not enter sign is likely to stop.

2) Railroad crossing and do not enter signs are not used as distractors for one another because the signs may be visually confusing for students. Both signs are circular, with letters written in the circles.

ITEM

Directions: Which sign means one way?

1. [picture: railroad crossing] 0 [picture: one way] #0

[picture: stop] 0

OBJECTIVE 3

Identify messages conveyed by symbols.

Assessment Level: 2A

CONTENT

The student identifies the meaning conveyed by symbols. The student is expected to identify the following symbols, as described in the instructional guide:

	Symbol	Meaning
1)	red traffic light	stop
2)	yellow traffic light	caution
3)	green traffic light	go
4)	two fingers placed on lips	love
5)	heart	love
6)	hand with index and middle fingers raised in a V shape	peace
7)	dove	peace

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The stimulus is a series of three pictures. The student identifies the picture that symbolizes the message specified in the directions. Distractors are (1) pictures of other symbols or (2) pictures of objects that are not taught as symbols in the instructional guide (e.g., a tree).

Comment: Instruction in the instructional guide includes three symbols that require the use of color (i.e., the red, yellow, and green traffic signals). Unless the assessment instrument is printed in color, these three symbols cannot be assessed. Consequently, only the symbols for love and peace are identified in these items. The traffic light (with no colors specified) is used as a distractor.

ITEMS

Directions: Which symbol means love?

1. [picture: heart] [picture: tree]
#0 0

[picture: dove]
0

OBJECTIVE 4

Demonstrate the use of nonverbal modes of communication.

Assessment Level: 6B

CONTENT

This objective covers the en-route objectives that are assessed at earlier grade levels. See these objectives for the content of the current objective.

ITEM DESCRIPTION

For descriptions of the items included for this review, see objectives at earlier levels.

ITEMS

For examples, see items for objectives at earlier levels.

PART III: PROFICIENCY SURVEYS AND REVIEW EXERCISES

PROFICIENCY SURVEYS AND REVIEW EXERCISES: SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

California state law requires school districts to determine that elementary school students are proficient in reading, writing, and mathematics before they can enter junior high school. The Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) entered into a contract with SWRL to develop an assessment system to meet this requirement.

SCUSD established the competencies with which they expected elementary school students to be proficient. SWRL staff worked with SCUSD staff to define and to delimit these competencies. Then SWRL staff developed a 1979 experimental proficiency survey to assess competencies in Reading, Mathematics, and Language.

The Language survey consists of 44 multiple-choice items assessing skills in six categories:

Spelling

Spell simple consonants, consonant clusters, and consonant digraphs in initial and final position.

Spell vowels, including single-letter spellings, VCe spellings, other two-letter vowel spellings, and vowels before the /r/ sound.

Spell the following inflectional suffixes: -s, -es, -ed, -ing, -er, -est.

Spell suffixed words with e dropped, with doubled final consonant, and with y changed to i.

Spell high frequency (irregular) words.

Capitalization

Capitalize the first word of a sentence.

Capitalize the word I.

Capitalize the names of persons, pets, days, months, places, holidays, and personal titles.

Capitalize the first word in dialogue quotations.

Punctuation

Use correct punctuation at end of declarative and interrogative sentences.

Use commas in dates, addresses, direct address, and series.

Use periods after abbreviations, including name titles and initials.

Use apostrophes in contractions and singular possessives.

Use appropriate punctuation with dialogue quotations.

Letter Writing

Use appropriate form for a personal letter.

Use appropriate form for an envelope.

Usage

Use sentence with subject-verb agreement.

Use correct pronoun case.

Use correct verb form: past tense vs. past participle.

Distinguish between adjective and adverb use.

Sentence and Paragraph Organization

Classify groups of words as complete or incomplete sentences.

Recognize the subject and predicate in a simple sentence.

Limit paragraph to one main idea.

Use topic sentence.

In addition, a writing sample was included to assess students' ability to write a brief composition.

The 1979 experimental version of the Proficiency Survey was used with students and found to be successful. Consequently, in 1980 SWRL developed a parallel version of the survey. The only major change in the 1980 version was in the writing sample. The 1979 writing sample had called for a comparison/contrast essay; the 1980 version called for map directions.

SCUSD students are required to obtain a passing score in each of the six skill categories as well as on the writing sample. Students who fail a section receive additional instruction and practice on the content of that section and are given another chance to pass the section. To provide this additional instruction and practice, SWRL developed "Language Review Exercises" for each skill category. These exercises (2-4 pages in length) briefly explain the skill and then provide direct (constructed-response) practice. After students have completed these review exercises, they have a second opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency with the skill area by taking a parallel version of the proficiency survey, called a Benchmark Survey.

PART IV: ANNOTATED BIBIOGRAPHY

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ASSESSMENT REPORTS

Technical Note No. 2-80/02

A Method for Evaluating Writing Samples
Ann Humes

The discrepancy in labeling systems for scoring writing samples is discussed and current scoring systems are described. Then a new model for scoring is presented by comparing and contrasting it with widely used systems.

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 193 631)

Technical Note No. 2-80/14

Specifications for 1-6 Writing Skills Assessment Part I: Mechanics
Ann Humes, Bruce Cronnell, Joseph Lawlor, Larry Gentry, Caroline Fieker

This paper specifies the assessment of those mechanics skills--handwriting, capitalization, punctuation, formats--that are needed for effective writing. (Other writing skills are specified for assessment in separate documents: Spelling, Language, General Discourse, and Discourse Products.) Each skill is described in detail; then sample assessment items are presented, followed by descriptions of how these items are constructed.

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 192 371)

Technical Note No. 2-80/15

Specifications for 1-6 Writing Skills Assessment Part II: Spelling
Ann Humes, Bruce Cronnell, Joseph Lawlor, Larry Gentry, Caroline Fieker

This paper specifies the assessment of those spelling skills that are needed for effective writing. (Other writing skills are specified for assessment in separate documents: Mechanics, Language, General Discourse, and Discourse Products.) Each skill is described in detail; then sample assesment items are presented, followed by descriptions of how these items are constructed.

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 192 372)

Technical Note No. 2-80/16

Specifications for 1-6 Writing Skills Assessment Part III: Language
Ann Humes, Bruce Cronnell, Joseph Lawlor, Larry Gentry, Caroline Fieker

This paper specifies the assessment of those language skills that are needed for effective writing. (Other writing skills are specified for assessment in separate documents: Mechanics, Spelling, General Discourse, and Discourse Products.) Each skill is described in detail; then sample assessment items are presented, followed by descriptions of how these items are constructed.

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 192 373)

Technical Note No. 2-80/17

Specifications for 1-6 Writing Skills Assessment Part IV: General Discourse
Ann Humes, Bruce Cronnell, Joseph Lawlor, Larry Gentry, Caroline Fieker

This paper specifies the assessment of those general discourse skills that are needed for effective writing. (Other writing skills are specified for assessment in separate documents: Mechanics, Spelling, Language, and Discourse Products.) Each skill is described in detail; then sample assessment items are presented, followed by descriptions of how these items are constructed.

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 192 374)

Technical Note No. 2-80/18

Specifications for 1-6 Writing Skills Assessment Part V: Discourse Products
Ann Humes, Bruce Cronnell, Joseph Lawlor, Larry Gentry, Caroline Fieker

This paper specifies the assessment of those discourse products skills that are needed for effective writing. (Other writing skills are specified for assessment in separate documents: Mechanics, Spelling, Language, and General Discourse.) Each skill is described; then sample assessment items are presented, followed by descriptions of how these items are constructed.

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 192 375)

Technical Note No. 2-80/22

Constructing Items for Assessing English Writing Skills
Ann Humes

This paper discusses the problems encountered when specifying the assessment of writing. Difficulties with skill statements and skill descriptions are noted. Also discussed are problems that occur during the writing of assessment items and directions for such items. Several sample items are presented: Their problems are pointed out and solutions are suggested.

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 192 377)

Technical Note No. 2-80/24

State Minimum Competencies for High School Graduation

Joseph Lawlor

Minimum competency programs in 13 states were analyzed, and a list of state-mandated communication skills was compiled. In addition, an index of practical skill applications was synthesized from the state documents. This information was merged with the results of an earlier survey, yielding a comprehensive skills list that includes information from 20 state education agencies.

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 193 674)

Technical Note No. 2-81/03

The scoring of writing samples: A study

Bruce Cronnell

A study was conducted to determine the reliability of scorers when rating writing samples with the SWRL-developed method for evaluating writing samples. Teachers and SWRL scorers were found to agree highly on their ratings of writing samples. Even greater agreement was found among SWRL scorers alone, and when the SWRL scorers rescored writing samples, they were very consistent in their scoring.